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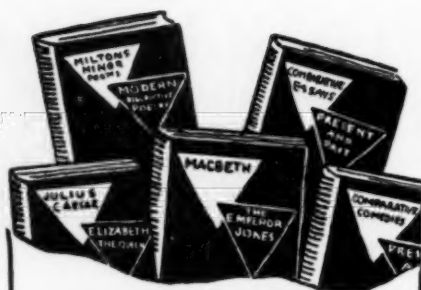
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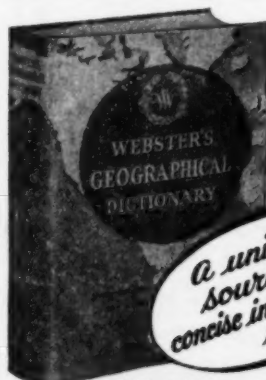
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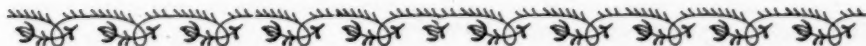
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FEBRUARY 1951

Number 5

A. B. Guthrie, Jr., and the West

DAYTON KOHLER¹

THE literary reputation of A. B. Guthrie, Jr., so far outweighs the body of his work that his case seems worth examining in greater detail than the average book review allows. To date he has published only two novels and several short stories. *The Big Sky* has for its central figure a trapper and squaw man in the heyday of the fur trade. *The Way West* is the story of some people who traveled overland to Oregon in 1845. The materials of his novels are not new. The mountain man came into literature as early as the 1840's, and ever since the time of Francis Parkman covered wagons on the Oregon Trail have left on our literature an imprint as deep as the marks of their wheels in prairie soil. His images of the hunt, the flight, the pursuit, and the emigrant trek derive inevitably from Cooper, who in *The Pioneers* and *The Prairie* set the pattern of frontier romance. Within limitations of substance and technique, however, Guthrie's area of achievement is clearly defined. He has brought to his re-creation of the western experience a new perspective and a different set of values. For these reasons a

consideration of his novels raises certain problems in connection with the treatment of the West in fiction.

The early West created its own literature. It was, to begin with, primitive oral storytelling born out of the hard, practical realities and grim humor of wilderness life. Its subjects were the lore of animals and climate, the arts of survival, the Indian warpath, the mother-lode, the narrow escape or misadventure which lent itself to hilarious exaggeration. It flourished in winter camps under the Tetons, at rendezvous in Pierre's Hole and along the Green, where mountain men came together to carouse, trade their furs, and swap lies, around campfires when wagon trains had halted for the night, in the barrooms and miners' shanties of many a Dead Man's Gulch and Angel's Roost, beside the chuck wagons at roundup time, on army outposts, in the settler's sod hut. Some of its heroes were men who had passed that way—Davy Crockett, Jim Bridger, Kit Carson, Bigfoot Wallace, Old Bill Williams. Others the storytellers shaped lusty and whole from inward necessity and fertile imaginations, so that Pecos Bill and

¹ Virginia Polytechnic Institute.

Cattle Annie have become as much a part of our folk heritage as Paul Bunyan and John Henry.

The pioneer storyteller was never a sentimentalist. When we read Davy Crockett's *Autobiography*, we find a realist at work under the swagger and brag. So it was with the tall tales of Jim Bridger and his clan. Their stories were vigorously masculine, mirthful, profane, with a strange undercurrent of fatality and doom. They were myth, the voice of the frontier appraising itself with realism and salty humor, expressing its contempt for an orderly human society, justifying its escape to the wild, free life of the mountains and the plains. In them was a spirit that went back beyond Daniel Boone in the Kentucky canebrakes, beyond Natty Bumppo in the forest beside Lake Glimmerglass, to the first settlements, for to most Americans the West has always been more a landscape of the imagination than a geographical fact. It is the oldest and most enduring of our myths, the land under the sunset; and the yarns of the trappers and the cowboys were the westward fantasy in the words of the men who lived it.

There was a time when western fiction meant Owen Wister, B. M. Bower, and Zane Grey, but that period has now passed. Signs of a realistic rediscovery of the West are plain in the work of a half-dozen or so writers who have brought the western novel to a level of imaginative interpretation where it can function best, in stories of human necessity and national destiny. Willa Cather wrote as the elegist of the frontier, but in her best novels we have an illuminating and affirmative evocation of the western land and its people. *Wolf Song*, by Harvey Fergusson, is a poetic but unsentimental story of old Taos and the mountain men. *The Sea of Grass* is Conrad Richter's

quiet footnote to the passing of the cattle empire. J. Frank Dobie and Ross Santee do not write novels; their books are authentic Americana in the older tradition of legend and anecdote. H. L. Davis examines with tall-story humor and sociological curiosity the energies of two different homesteading eras in *Beulah Land* and *Honey in the Horn*. Vardis Fisher deals with an epic theme in *Children of God*, a slow-moving, powerful chronicle of the great Mormon migration. Walter Van Tilburg Clark brings the modern sensibility to the cow country in *The Ox-Bow Incident*, a taut, unsparing fable of the tensions that breed violence and injustice in the modern world. In his novels A. B. Guthrie, Jr., has reclaimed two important phases of the western experience from the activities of the biographer and the historian.

In no sense are these writers to be thought of as a school. Miss Cather, for example, would have rejected completely the primitive, lawless societies of *The Ox-Bow Incident* and *The Big Sky*. Their books, however, are widely separated examples stemming from a common impulse, the attempt to evaluate frontier experience in the West in its social and moral aspects as well as in its historical perspectives. Frederick Jackson Turner's classic work on the influence of the frontier in American life is as relevant to art as it is to scholarship. None of these books is, significantly, a cowboy story in the meaning which that hackneyed term has held for almost half a century. (Bad writing and creative inertia have reduced the range romance to a subliterate plane from which not even Eugene Manlove Rhodes was able to redeem it.) Instead, the serious writer in the western tradition is likely to find his subjects in more revealing and significant periods, as Guth-

rie has done in *The Big Sky* and *The Way West*.

A novel as violent in mood as the life it portrays, *The Big Sky* opens with Boone Caudill's flight from his home in Kentucky after assaulting his drunken, brutal father. A moody, secretive boy, he feels himself cut off from the only society he knows when he is chased, robbed, beaten, and given a taste of rough frontier justice. With Jim Deakins, an amiable and chancy friend whom he meets while running from the law, he moves on to St. Louis, bustling, prosperous center of the fur trade. The year is 1830, and the trapping brigades are spreading deeper into the mountains. Boone and Deakins sign up for a keelboat expedition which Jourdonnais, a French trader, is taking into the headwaters of the Missouri in an attempt to establish trade with the hostile Blackfeet. The journey is one of hardship and danger, but Jourdonnais has a hostage to fortune in the person of Teal Eye, a Blackfoot girl whom he is returning to her tribe. Dick Summers is the scout and hunter of the expedition, a mountain man of wilderness skills and seasoned wisdom. Under his tutoring Boone Caudill and Deakins learn the country and its ways. The rough life suits Boone, who is as empty of warm human impulses as the land itself. "There was the sky above, blue as paint, and the brown earth rolling underneath, and himself between them with a wild, free feeling in his chest, as if they were the ceiling and floor of a home that was all his own." One night Teal Eye slips over the side of the boat and runs away. Three days later the Blackfeet attack, killing all the party except Boone, Deakins, and Summers.

Seven years later Boone and Deakins have become mountain men. Hard-bitten, weather-beaten, their buckskins

stained with grease and blood, their hair long and braided, they are scarcely distinguishable from the Indians whose beaver ponds and hunting grounds they have raided. With Summers they have crossed mountain passes and trapped in unnamed streams. They have known hunger, thirst, desert heat, and mountain cold. They have stalked Indians and been stalked in turn, and they boast of the scalps they have taken. Each year they have satisfied the hungers of their solitary lives with the orgies of the rendezvous—raw liquor, gambling, squaws, eye-gouging, groin-kicking, rough-and-tumble fights—and then they have gone back to the mountains. For Boone their lonely existence has become a necessity and a passion. Jim Deakins, who knows him best, never really understands him:

He never seemed to get lonesome or to want to see folks, except once in a while for a squaw that he was through with almost as quick as he got her. He was like an animal, like a young bull that traveled alone, satisfied just by earth and water and trees and the sky over him. It was as if he talked to the country for company and the country talked to him, and as if that was enough. He found his fill of people quick; he took his fill of whisky quicker, drinking it down like an Indian and getting himself good and drunk while another man was just warming up. Then one morning before the rendezvous was more than half over he would wake up and want to make off, to places where you wouldn't see a white man in a coon's age.

But the days of the prime beaver are almost over. Summers heads back toward Missouri after the rendezvous of 1837. He is the character through whom Guthrie shows the feeling of the wild, savory life that was passing.

After his departure Boone and Deakins strike north into the Blackfoot country. Boone has remembered Teal Eye. When he finds her, he woos her with a Crow war pony and the scalp of its owner. Living

with the Piegans, he faces moral responsibility for the first time. Elisha Peabody is looking for a guide who will show him the route across the Marias and into the Oregon territory, a new trail that will end the isolation of Teal Eye's people. He knows what the Indians expect of him, but "there wasn't any man going to tell him what to do." He spends a terrible winter with Peabody's party in the snow-choked mountain passes. When he returns in the spring, his son has been born, blind. The baby is redheaded—like Jim Deakins, as he morosely convinces himself. In a blind impulse to destroy, he kills his friend.

In the end he goes back to Kentucky, to learn that there have been redheads among the Caudills as well. Again he heads back toward the West. Emigrant wagons are rolling into Missouri on the trail to Oregon. Near Independence he finds Dick Summers, married and settled on a small farm. The novel closes with Boone's lament for the paradise he and his wild breed have lost: "It's like it's all sp'iled for me now, Dick—Teal Eye and the Teton and all. Don't know as I can ever go back."

On one level *The Big Sky* is entertaining melodrama, the Old West of hunting and trapping, Indian fighting, violence and sudden death. On another it is a novel of atmosphere, its pages lovely and luminous with the sense of great spaces and empty skies conveyed in images of sunset-flushed peaks, stormy winter nights, green river valleys, autumn moons; a land where "one day and another it was pretty much the same, and it was all good." But the true meaning of Guthrie's novel comes through, not in action or landscape painting, but in an unexposed pattern of ideas and images bringing the whole into proper focus.

We can make no greater demand

upon the art of the novelist than this: Granted the imaginative reality of his story, he must convey upon the level of significant meaning some truth about human conduct and its consequences. Because Guthrie tries to answer this demand, his novel has moral value beyond mere entertainment. His sense of form allows no surprises of technique, and his style is at times uncertain, but no one could doubt the seriousness of his purpose. He writes about the frontier, a subject and an experience which concerns us all, though we may be separated from it by generations. The physical frontier has reached its dead end, but its emotional and moral forces are still unspent. We take certain habits of our minds and nerves from the frontier experience; it gave us as well our tormenting restlessness, our social and racial tensions, and the sense of loneliness which Europeans have often noted, a feeling of isolation and lostness that Willa Cather lightly touched upon but which runs like a despairing refrain through the novels of Thomas Wolfe.

The story of westward expansion is the fundamental American experience. It gives life and drama to our history and confirms our unity and progress as a nation. But we have grown used to seeing the frontier only in its broad and generous outlines, as De Tocqueville viewed it and Walt Whitman hymned it, the dramatic spectacle of pathfinders marching toward the Pacific, and civilization following in their footsteps. The frontier was a historical reality, but it was also myth, a summons to adventure, the promise of a better life, the second chance. If myth was to sustain the illusion of a fat present and a heroic past, it had to leave out whatever fails to flatter national self-esteem. What was missing from the noble view of the pioneer was

the sense of human values, the appalling waste of the human spirit and effort, and the emotional erosion which frontier life imposed. The realistic writer must always restore the cost of hardship and the casual cruelty of things to the story of the frontier.

Guthrie is a realist. Boone Caudill was a mountain man. That is the whole point of his social and aesthetic significance, for the mountain man was the "white Injun," the product of his environment. He brought the skills of woodcraft to the point of highest development on this continent. In a region where his life often depended on his ability to interpret instantly and unerringly the slightest sound or motion, he outwitted the Indian on his home ground. Instinct became his compass and barometer. To supply furs for traders who exploited him, he covered every mountain, river, and valley in a territory spanning a third of a continent. Breaking trails where the settler would soon follow, he reduced the perspectives of history from centuries to decades. His equipment was meager—a horse, a few traps, a gun, powder, lead, salt. On occasion he survived for months with nothing but a knife. He had no use for the money his furs brought him, and he wasted his catch on liquor, cards, squaws. He added a new symbol of loneliness—the mountains—to the American experience. Their silence and emptiness ate into him, and in his tensed spirit he reverted to savagery. Having invented the phrase that the only good Indian is a dead one, he killed and scalped to justify his belief. Dehumanized, ferocious, he took his pleasures at the yearly rendezvous and then fled back to his mountains. Thoreau wrote, "Eastward I go only by force; but westward I go free." The mountain man lived this text in ways undreamed of by Concord's naturalist-sage. There was always

the road back, but few ever took it for long; the mountain man expected to go on until he lost his hair in some sudden ambush or until the steams were trapped out and the settlers moved in. And in the end he despoiled the land which made him a free man.

The mountain man was the master of his environment but not of himself. Like Boone Caudill, he was unable to endure human relationships and social institutions. In him we see American individualism in its most extreme and elemental form trying to get away, to break all ties with the past. His struggle became psychic, because his need to conquer the wilderness turned into a wish to destroy. The ravages of the machine age did no more than complete the processes he began. Since the frontier is the deeply possessed national experience within the common consciousness, we owe to him in part the restlessness, the flaring violence, the communal shame and guilt, the inner fears, and secret loneliness which agitate our society today.

Guthrie has been fortunate in that the stories he has to tell lend themselves to the use of historical images, the kind of symbolic figure for which other writers capable of more subtle and aesthetic effects often search in vain. In *The Big Sky* his image is the mountain man, solitary, morose, fiercely independent, given to wild humors and murderous rages. All the lesser symbols of the novel—the frontier court which aroused Boone Caudill's resentment of law and order, the beaver which looked at him with quick, frightened eyes in the moment of dying, Boone's quest for Teal Eye, the blind child, the spoiled paradise—tend toward a fuller understanding of the trapper's place in the landscape and history of the West.

Like Natty Bumppo, Boone Caudill

stands for a place and a time. Here Guthrie's fable is one of man outside society, but in *The Way West* his subject is society itself. True, it is a very special society, a drift of population across a continent, and his image is the slow wagon train carrying his people westward. *The Way West* presents another aspect of the pioneer experience, so different that at first reading Guthrie's two novels hardly seem to spring from the same source. In some ways his second book is less compelling than *The Big Sky*, but its subject is of greater significance, and it is by every standard a better novel. Here his characters are more varied, his insights deeper. His style, too, is more restrained, less likely to flower in passages of poetry and rhetoric. Undoubtedly *The Way West* is our best novel of the Oregon Trail and one of our most informing works on the subject outside the field of scholarly history.

Manifest Destiny was already in the air, a topic for newspaper editorials and vigorous campaign speeches, when the "On-to-Oregon" company set out from Independence, Missouri, in the spring of 1845. Guthrie's movers are a lot as mixed as any Parkman saw starting out from the same place the next year. Tadlock, organizer of the expedition, dreams of personal advancement and political power in the new territory. The Fairmans hope to find a healthier climate for their invalid son. Curtis Mack is trying to run away from his own weak nature. The shiftless McBees are running from debt. The Byrds hope for another chance. Brother Weatherley has heard a call from the Lord to carry salvation to the Indian. Others, like Patch and Daugherty, are on the move because the rest of America seems to be heading west and they go with the current. Lije Evans signs up because he thinks that if Oregon

is to belong to anyone it should go to the United States and not the British. Besides, Evans' old friend Dick Summers, now a widower, has agreed to guide the train across the mountains. As the train moves up the Platte to Fort Laramie, then along the Sweetwater, across South Pass, and down the Snake to the Columbia, we see in the experiences of the movers an example of democracy at work. A few die, two are married, the weak turn back; but the main party moves on toward Oregon and the future. There are no melodramatic touches in Guthrie's picture of the Oregon movement; much of his story is deliberately keyed down to the factual, day-by-day record of endurance and determination that we find in old journals and diaries of the period. His novel is quiet but passionate affirmation of the pioneer's ability to rise above trial and error and the bickerings of its mixed groups, so that the achievement of their objective became a moral victory as well.

Dick Summers is the character relating *The Way West* to *The Big Sky*. In him we see the fate of the mountain men who lived in the later period. Scouts and hunters for the movers, they used their hard-won knowledge and skills to guide the tenderfoot on the long trek that was to make him a pioneer and a homesteader. Again, as in *The Big Sky*, we are made to realize that the day of the open West is passing.

Deakins was dead and Caudill disappeared, and of the mountain men who had hunted and spread and squawed with him, was there a handful left? He didn't want much to see them, with years in their faces and aches in their bones and the past in their heads, so that all they could talk about, while whisky stirred dead fires, was this and that of long ago.

Together, *The Big Sky* and *The Way West* sum up two periods in the history of

a region, the age of the explorer and trapper and the age of the settler. At the same time they reveal a deep tension in their author's own mind. It is clear that Guthrie is of two opinions about the frontier experience. As he projects it through the story of Lije Evans and the "On-to-Oregon" company, it is good, a promise of law and social stabilization in an area that had been solitary and wild. But in the closing chapters of *The Big Sky* and in the musings of Dick Summers the reading is that the white man defiles nature through motives of greed and ruthless conquest. These books present the same mixed social theory that we find in *The Prairie*, where Leatherstocking and Ishmael Bush represent the same opposing viewpoints. We are told that Guthrie is planning two more novels to make up a panel of four about the West. Perhaps his own views will be clearer in the next novel of the series.

At the present time his chief weakness is in the drawing of character. His people, in spite of their tremendous energies, seldom give the impression of depth. Like a scene viewed in flat light, his background figures are often more shadowy than real. Some of them we know by readily identifiable tags—Teal Eye, solemn, birdlike; Jim Deakins, amiable, red-headed, with joking ways to set off Boone's moroseness; Tadlock, domineering and petulant; Dick Summers, slow-spoken, wise, retrospective. The flat character has great literary value—some writers, like Dickens, have created no other kind—but chiefly for eccentricity or humor. We remember these characters easily, usually because they make over-size or exceedingly small certain qualities we recognize as being true to human nature, and they function best in the story where everything is unmitigated and extreme. In *The Big Sky* they do convey

the violence and squalor of the time, but the picture of a social group, such as Guthrie draws in *The Way West*, needs greater depth and more than a four-square surface if we are to think of his people as more than types. Since he can make his characters vivid enough within the circumstantial life of his novels, it is possible that he will eventually create men and women who have existence beyond the demands of his plot. Several of the characters in *The Way West* certainly mark a technical advance over those in *The Big Sky*.

No small part of his effectiveness is due to the texture of his novels, the careful weaving-in of surface details he has absorbed from the western tradition. It is unfortunate that he has not made greater use of the tall story, the frontiersman's way of coping with bewildering or overwhelming circumstance, for the few yarns told by Dick Summers have the ring and authenticity of the early West. On the other hand, his novels contain an amazing fund of frontier lore. In *The Way West* we learn, for example, the regulations that governed a wagon train: "Require wagons be capable of carrying a quarter more than their load, teams of drawing a quarter more. . . . Death for murder. . . . Thirty-nine lashes for three days for rape. . . . Thirty-nine lashes on the bare back for adultery and fornication. . . . Council to fix penalty for indecent language. . . . Recommend train start at seven o'clock every morning and travel from ten to fifteen miles every day. . . . Require provisions in the following amounts . . . two hundred pounds of flour per person, except for infants . . . seventy-five pounds of meal . . . fifty pounds of bacon. . . ." We learn how the movers powwowed with Indians on the trail, why horses had to be tied to the branches and not the trunks of trees, how

a shrunken wheel was re-tired on the way, how a buffalo was skinned and butchered, and what camp fever was and how men died of it.

There are sayings that sound like proverbs and snatches of folk wisdom: "A man could live, even if not fat, if he had a mind to work." "Cats breed cats." "Whisky's stouter the longer she sets." "I don't hanker to live in no anthill." When times grew hard on the frontier, "a man could put one beaver of whisky in his eye and never wink." A stealthy crawler inches along "like sneaking on a goat and only one bullet to his name."

We learn how newcomers in the West were initiated when keelboats reached the Upper Missouri, how wolves traveled in packs, "bringing up the tail of the bands of buffalo, their eyes yellow and their tongues wet while they watched for a stray calf or a cripple or one too old to keep up," how the "day-after-day roll of wheels, the dust, the heat and wind and rain and mud and chill" blotted out

memories of home, until it seemed to the mover that "the only way he ever faced was west." Guthrie notes tensions that sociologists have left unrecorded: "A woman might hate moving because of leaving her marigolds." He knows the hymns the people sang when a body was buried beside the trail and how the grave was marked, the lay of the land in all lights and weathers, the insulting epithets, the grim jokes, the signs which read, "Help yourself," in regions where the oxen wore out or the wagons broke down and a family's possessions were left behind. Details such as these sketch in the backgrounds of his people and his stories. The result is rich and convincing.

The region Guthrie writes about is not the West of popular appeal, but it is no less alive and real. His two books show him as a first-rate historical novelist. If he has not yet assimilated the whole of the western experience, clarified it, and given it final, possessable form, he has at least reclaimed a significant part of it as a province for realistic interpretation.

For Mortal Stakes'

MARK NEVILLE²

TONIGHT marks the beginning of the end of an extremely busy and stimulating year for me. Naturally I was pleased when I was elected to the presidency of one of the most vital and dynamic education organizations in the United States, the National Council of Teachers of English. I have been fortunate indeed in your choice of first vice-president, Paul Farmer, and second vice-president, Edna

Sterling. I think that we have worked diligently to insure the continuing growth and effectiveness of the Council. Undoubtedly, there have been errors of judgment during the year, but, as far as I know, no grievous deviation has been made from the path of progress. You see, the president of the Council is constantly helped by the kindly guidance of the other members of the Executive Committee, the members of committees, and, for the annual meeting, by the local committee. I now salute them all!

Tonight I am going to take the oppor-

² Presidential address, National Council of Teachers of English, delivered in Milwaukee on Thanksgiving evening, 1950.

³ John Burroughs School; NCTE President, 1950.

tunity to discuss with you some of my opinions regarding the teaching and learning of English. I lay no claim to infallibility. I do not speak as one who knows the answers or as one who pretends to know them. But I have been teaching and learning English since 1923 and have arrived at a number of clear-cut conclusions. My various points of view, changing from year to year, it is true, but never blown about by the winds of fashionable doctrine, have from time to time caused me to be dubbed "conservative" by the "liberals" and "liberal" by the "conservatives." It seems that characteristics are interpreted according to the personality of the analyst.

Some teachers of English are secure in the knowledge that, if they could direct the efforts of the rest of us, all would be well. Others are most anxious to be directed and accept every theory and "ism" propounded from the rostrums of teacher-training institutions. Still others are bewildered by changing concepts, the newer psychology, core courses, the common learnings organizations, and complete integration.

A number of years ago I attended an exhibition of Pablo Picasso's paintings in a small gallery off Fifth Avenue in New York City. Many people were there. Some seemed really to understand what Picasso had done; others seemed to want to understand; still others were in a daze. I noticed a young couple gazing in rapture at a square piece of burlap decorated by a large rope square knot in one corner, a large safety pin such as a Scot uses to fasten his kilt on the opposite corner, while the other corners and the center were decorated by sundry commonplace items. The girl was a synthetic blonde, casually dressed; the boy a long-haired pseudo-artist type, casually dressed. They seemed to know why they were concentrating on this particular symbol-

ism and were so intent that I also decided to pause in reverie. Finally, feeling that I would enjoy concentrating on the couple more than on the Picasso symbolic representation, I did so. In a few minutes, with a deep sigh, the boy turned to the girl and said slowly and distinctly, "My dear, are you bewildered in the correct manner?"

I do not know that teachers of English are bewildered in the correct manner. I do know that we are bewildered.

Educational theory changes so rapidly, especially in the secondary-school areas, that, by the time that teachers catch up with, let us say, the popular theory of 1940, it is already 1950 and they are ten years behind. Elementary-school teachers seem to be much more progressive and forward-looking than we teachers in secondary schools are. College teachers don't seem to have much to worry about. Every college makes its own rules, and each professor seems to believe in *laissez aller*. This unconstrained freedom at the top is undoubtedly good in dealing with adults, some of whom may or may not have mature minds; however, it places a premium upon the quality of teaching and learning in the elementary and secondary schools. Hence there is a great need for careful studies of children and youths, resources for teaching and learning, and acceptable psychological concepts that should be the foundation of good methodology.

The impassioned few—those teachers of English who are members of the National Council of Teachers of English—are potentially rich in resources as a result of sincere, intelligent, and important studies made by individuals and committees within the national Council. We are sensitive to the fact that English is not merely a means of education, "one mansion in a house of many mansions," but that it is the foundation upon which

the house must stand or fall. This foundation must not be built of a heterogeneous conglomeration of unrelated building materials in grammar, spelling, punctuation, practice writing, creative writing, and literature that is good only for the soul. They are all valuable, of course, but they must be "processed and made pure in the light of the whole design."

The whole design is based on the premise that we are educating—indoctrinating, if you will—American children in a knowledge of their mother-tongue and in a knowledge of their native literature as a means of understanding their freedoms, duties, and responsibilities as citizens of a country which, with God's help, will find the way to a peaceable brotherhood of man. This is not a narrow view. We do not say study only American literature. We do say that no form of literature can take precedence over American literature for American girls and boys. In the Introduction to the *Harvard Reading List in American History*, we read:

Whatever its causes, American ignorance of American history and literature, of the arts of this country, and of American intellectual development may be dangerous for the future. Unless citizens of a Democracy are aware of the means by which this country has become what it is—the efforts and sacrifices that have been made in the past to secure liberty and opportunity for the present—they are apt to exchange their birthright for the proverbial mess of pottage. Unless they understand the genesis of the various abuses which afflict the country today, they are not likely to choose intelligent means to rid themselves of these abuses. Without knowledge of the constant and, on the whole, beneficial impact of western European ideas on American political thought, literature and social and economic concepts, they will too easily fall into a narrow-minded nationalism.

This concept of American education should, in my opinion, be engraved in the hearts and minds of every one of the more than thirteen thousand members of

the NCTE and the more than one million teachers in American schools and colleges who teach English as the common means of communication.

At this very moment, when we are in the midst of political and economic uncertainty, when there is a cultural lag in world relationships, when we are poised militarily to defend with our fortunes—and our lives if necessary—our way of life, we must "sharpen the dull and superficial wit" of those who consider English as a tool and "illuminate and help it to penetrate in the direction of reality."

This reality is embodied in a conception of education that recognizes English not only as the foundation of education but also as "the continuing material by which the structure is made firm and valuable."

I often wonder if we who so strongly defend our own ways and means of teaching English are defending the indefensible. Do we think carefully of what we mean by "English"? If we continue to discuss in detail the teaching of the parts without a real conception of their relationship to the whole, we shall make little progress in convincing our critics—and they are legion—that we think in terms of values.

English is merely the medium—and nothing more—through which we communicate with our fellow-men and through which we can understand, if we master the language adequately, their communications. English is history. English is mathematics. English is science. English is industrial arts. English is physical education. English is all these rolled into one, the best and the worst that has been said and thought in the world.

We, as teachers of English, must realize that the world is our domain and that we must work co-operatively with all

other teachers in the profession. But we must not defend what we teach and how we teach and become blinded as to whom we teach. Perhaps we have been overzealous in defending English—which needs no defense—and have forgotten to defend the right of all American youth to have a liberal education through English. Perhaps we have been so critical of such reports as *Education for All American Youth*, *General Education in a Free Society*, and others that we have placed ourselves on the defensive and are standing firm without a general program. Perhaps we have failed to lead the way. English is a social study, and the sooner we recognize that, the better. Don't be alarmed; I am not going over to the other camp. I am merely seeking an understanding in order to invite the other boys into my camp. To copy the style of Daniel Webster, a New Hampshire man: If we work on punctuation, it will perish; if we work upon grammar, time will efface it; if we rear composition on summer vacations, it will crumble into dust; but if we work upon immortal minds, if we imbue pupils with principles, with just fear of God, and love of our fellowman, we engrave on those tablets something which will brighten to all eternity.

To generalize on the importance of English as the foundation of education is one thing; to teach English successfully is quite another. The public, the school administrator, the teacher-training institution, the teacher, and the pupil are equally responsible for the quality of English teaching and learning. Public confidence in education as a whole is being undermined in some contemporary literature, with the result that public support is weakened. The National Education Association is working valiantly to inform the people of the needs of schools. The NEA is seeking increased

revenue and improved instruction. The NCTE must keep the public informed as to the importance of all children's rights to rich experiences in language and in literature. These rights must be our constant guides in impressing the public that, however little is paid for education, it may be too much if we lose sight of the importance of English as the foundation stone of our educational system.

We need to educate the educators. Lip service is given to English, and too frequently teachers with free periods are assigned to teach the extra English class. Granted that such an assignment is an expedient one, it is still a bad one. Administrators should become well informed as to the basic aims of the teaching of English. They should know why the teaching of English should be improved. They might begin by a careful study of teacher qualifications—not those prescribed by an educational association that worships at the feet of the gods of requirements in education but by a study of the teacher's ability to work co-operatively with others, his knowledge, and his ability to apply teaching materials to learning situations that matter. These are the real qualifications for good teaching. Nothing can supplant them, and, although it is a good thing to require credits in professional education courses as a measure of training, without the real qualifications advanced credits and advanced degrees are meaningless.

Although there is continual improvement, teacher-training institutions certainly can do much more than they are doing. Particularly is there need for a closer relationship between colleges of liberal arts and colleges of education in universities. Specifically, English teachers in liberal arts colleges must not stand aloof in relation to teachers in training concerned with English education. How

dull it is to hear pure teachers of English scoff at methods courses! They are for content. Good! I am not speaking amiss when I suggest that more solid content in teachers' colleges and better methods in liberal arts colleges would go a long way toward solving the dilemma of the young high school teacher of English in the making.

The teacher of English needs to go on the offensive for a change. His responsibility is no mean one. It is one that must be made crystal clear to public, educational administrator, and college alike. "We are the music makers; we are the dreamer of dreams"; and we are the bulwark of education, and we are a vital force in United States democracy. We must acquire the ability to assimilate new resources for teaching and not passively sit by while social studies, for example, takes the lead in utilizing our contemporary history, events, and institutions, while we relegate our efforts to a scientific study of language and the promotion of fiction and poetry. We need to join with other departments in promoting integrated studies based upon worthwhile experiences for children and youth. We must stop the foolish practice of calling on all teachers to help us to impress upon all pupils the values of English by setting aside Good English Week in our schools. Their job is not to help us. Our job is to help them. In this good sense, English supplements the work of all teachers.

But we must never forget that there is an area of experience that English and English alone can provide. I am now speaking about the humanizing effects of literature. All too frequently, literature is a dull experience for pupils.³ The

practical everyday sort of English teaching—speech, oral and written composition, grammar and usage, the mechanics of style, and the stolid treatment of authors—is concerned with the science of the teaching of English.

We must distinguish sharply between the teaching of language and the teaching of literature. Language is susceptible to the scientific treatment. Literature is not. Too many of us fail to understand this fact. The scientific treatment, when applied to literature, calls for results that can be measured, and so an examination system designed to measure reading ability, accumulated information, and biographical details about lives of authors is considered the backbone of appreciation. Absurd! Book reviews, designed to measure honesty as much as information, are usually lifeless, dull, and uninteresting—"the product of sad-hearted and mean-spirited pupils" who are subjected to the scientific treatment of literature. If literature is not a pleasure and a delight, a meeting of minds, a philosophical challenge, a spiritual force, it is a failure. Literature is an art and must be treated as an art.

Literature in school is considered in two ways: books for general reading and books for study. I believe that teachers of English are making a grave error if they do not share pupil time with other teachers in the general-reading or outside-reading program. General reading must become a condition of school life; it must not remain in the category of English requirements. Books for study should be selected in the light of their appeal to pupil emotion and intellectual maturity, their cultural heritage, and teacher interest. Regardless of the talk about the importance of the child, we cannot, if we would, divorce the teacher from the literature he likes. When we re-

³ The following discussion has been influenced by *The Teaching of English in England* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1919).

strict the teacher by determining in advance the content of his courses, especially the literature content, we are forbidding him the use of the imaginative and creative qualities essential to full and satisfying experiences with children through books.

The teaching of literature means essentially the induction of pupils into the channels of observation, reflection, imagination, and emotion explored by disciplined minds. This induction calls for creative treatment. In the wide sense there is a spiritual or philosophical quality in every worthy selection to be studied. There must be a like quality in the treatment. We, whose privilege it is to introduce children to the great humanizing effects of novels, dramas, biographies, and poetry, with all the philosophy of life involved in them, should be constant students of literature ourselves, striving with "some degree of intimacy with creative minds." Our great accomplishment should be the ability to speak of books in their true spirit to our pupils. If we can do this, we need not fear too much the effects of the transitory literature in the form of sensationalism and comics.

In order to realize the great possibilities inherent in literature, we must make a distinction between what we commonly call "reading" and what we call "literature." Reading is information—experience as characterized by the almost religious fervor with which we are exhorted to teach children to read for exact meaning, as if the teacher of English were wholly responsible for providing that kind of experience. Absurdity, number two! Literature is character experience. "Its influence upon the pupil is subtle and powerful. For many pupils literature is the most varied and fruitful experience in their entire lives." We must then recognize that a program of

literature narrowly prescribed and given the scientific treatment is not destined to contribute greatly to intellectual growth.

Pupils have an enormous appetite for information. Constantly they are close to lurid magazines displayed in their favorite drugstore. They are omnivorous readers of comics and, as they advance toward maturity, read with increasing interest the book of the day, the book of the week, and the book of the month. We teachers are wringing our hands in exasperation and frustration because the precautions we take against these insidious forces seem always to be defeated by the natural curiosity of youth.

Sometimes I fear that our overscrupulous attitude in questions of propriety adds to the difficulty of the problem. Pupils' curiosity cannot be effectively suppressed. Our responsibility is to make sure that "right reason and right thinking" are the signposts that direct our pupils on the road to discovery. Such hackneyed criticisms as "this is one of the most beautiful poems in the English language," "you must read this; it is a part of your cultural heritage," and "this is good for the soul" have yet to be proved influential in increasing the appreciation of literature. Condemnation, avoidance, and protest make a weak foundation for dynamic teaching. Positive measures are necessary if we would introduce our student to some of the best that has been said and thought in the world. Pupils grow by what they feed on. We must help them to select a literature diet planned by the sanest of voices and set by the greatest observers of human relationships. The literature accessible is abundant.

"Convention and timidity still hamper us in our choices." We follow the pattern set by the editors and publishers of text-

books and fail to do any exploring and pioneering in the contemporary literature written for the girls and boys we teach. We need a nice balance of the new and the old. We must share the new and the old with our pupils and make clear to them the importance of Browning's maxim:

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life for which the first was made;
Our times are in his hand
Who saith, a whole I planned.
Youth shows but half; trust God; see all nor
be afraid.

So far I have been speaking about the human forces that contribute to the growth of the pupil. What about him? He is the most important material in education. But we must not coddle him. We must challenge him. Our responsibility is to help to release his capacity; if we are bewildered sometimes, so is he. For him we have planned multitudinous curriculum patterns from the adult point of view. We become so enamored of our own particular pet theory of organization that we forget that the child is the center of activity and stand ready to battle against all and sundry who attack our supposed sacrosanct position. This is particularly true of our various organizations for the teaching of grammar. Our confusion of tongues comes from our confusion of thought.

An established principle is that teaching and learning begin with the interest of the group. Too frequently we have interpreted "group" as the children only. The group is the children on one end of the log and Mark Hopkins on the other; that is, the group is composed of children and teacher. The children have enthusiasm, desire, and limited experience. The teacher has knowledge of pupil characteristics, social background, un-

derstanding of individual needs, and the social values basic to group consciousness. He guides them within a framework of desirable experiences set up in advance, and he takes advantage of "on-the-spot planning" with them within the framework.

I have yet to meet a child who cannot learn something. Yes, I have seen children fail to accomplish what I had hoped they would accomplish. I have seen them weep bitter tears because they just couldn't understand why the subject of an infinitive should be in the objective case; and I have observed them thrilled on hearing a well-turned phrase written by a classmate in a personal essay. I have seen them bewildered on a first reading of Walt Whitman's "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking"; and I have noted their unbounded joy in participating in the poetry of a developing double reverse from a single wing formation. I have seen Hans Kohn write much above their heads on race conflict in Volume XIII, pages 36-41, of the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*; and I have seen John R. Tunis write deeply into their pulsing hearts on race conflict in his excellent story, *All-American*. I have seen enough to know that every pupil is a child of dignity and that the materials we select to bolster his ego and develop his understanding must be within the range of his ability to assimilate.

The NCTE, through its Curriculum Commission and the subcommittees of the commission, is studying American children, youths, and adults in relation to their culture and their culture in relation to them. This process of interaction bids fair to produce worth-while suggestions for improving the teaching of English. To put the suggestions into effect means that we must strive to understand one another within the field of the teach-

ing of English. There is no better way to summarize my remarks tonight than to consider the spirit of self-analysis so ably said by Robert Frost in "Two Tramps in Mud Time." Frost found himself splitting wood. Two tramps came along and wanted the job. Frost considered the day and the attitude of the lumberjacks and concluded:

Nothing on either side was said,
They knew they had but to stay their stay,
And all their logic would fill my head:
As if I had no right to play

With what was another man's work for gain.
My right might be love but theirs was need.
And where the two exist in twain
Theirs was the better right—agreed.

But yield who will to their separation,
My object in living is to unite
My avocation with my vocation,
As my two eyes make one in sight.
Only where love and need are one,
And the work is play for mortal stakes,
Is the deed ever really done
For heaven and for future's sakes.⁴

⁴ Used by permission of the publishers, Henry Holt and Company.

The Converted Knight in Chaucer's "Wife of Bath's Tale"

JOSEPH P. ROPPOLO¹

SCHOLARS, almost without exception, have treated the story told by the Wife of Bath in *The Canterbury Tales* as merely a fairy tale, an exemplum designed to illustrate the Wife's belief that happiness in marriage can be achieved only if the wife is granted sovereignty. In studies made from this point of view, emphasis falls naturally and obviously upon the Hag, and the story is known generally as the story of the Loathly Lady. It is possible, however, that Chaucer is here telling two stories simultaneously—two stories which merge in surface detail but which diverge in moral preachment with strongly ironic effect; for the "Wife of Bath's Tale" is not merely the account of an amazingly ugly woman who, by magic, becomes beautiful. It is also the story of the change which occurs in a selfish, proud, and morally blind knight who is taught to find beauty and worth in wisdom and purity. Through such an interpretation,

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the Knight gains importance, scenes hitherto considered little more than digressions become meaningful and essential parts of the tale as a whole, and the complex character of the Wife of Bath, already plentifully revealed in the "General Prologue" and in her own "Prologue," is shown in consistent and appropriate action.

The Knight, then, is the major problem here. In the search for light on his character, let us turn first to the scholars who have treated the "Wife of Bath's Tale." From the point of view of this paper, these treatments fall into three groups: those which show almost complete disregard for the Knight; those which make generalizations concerning the Knight; and those in which some analysis of the Knight's role appears.

When the "Wife of Bath's Tale" is examined as merely the story of the Loathly Lady, there is little room for disagreement on two points: it is a fairy story, and it is an exemplum demonstrat-

ing the Wife's thesis of sovereignty. The Hag and the Wife of Bath become the two characters of major importance, and the Knight is almost a mechanical instrument used for purposes of plot. Lowes, Chute, Maynadier, Root, Legouis, and Margaret Schlauch are in accord on these points and belong in the category of those critics who show almost complete disregard for the Knight. Chute summarizes this attitude: "The text of the Wife of Bath is that women shall have full sovereignty in marriage, and her delightful fairy tale is merely to illustrate the point."²

In the second category—generalizations concerning the Knight—are the comments of Lounsbury, Tupper, Kittredge, Patch, Curry, and Mrs. Dempster. Lounsbury, for example, in his *Studies in Chaucer*, finds the Wife's tale "full of wisest observation, of keenest insight into character and motive," but he does not discuss the characterization and motivation of the Knight.³ Tupper calls the "Wife of Bath's Tale" a "pride tale," but his emphasis falls on the sermon on gentillesse rather than on the person to whom it is directed.⁴ Kittredge sees the sermon as "a definite part of the dramatic plan" of the tale, but he is speaking of the Wife of Bath, not the Knight, for he adds that "the sermon or curtain lecture is in perfect accord with the

worthy Wife's own argumentative habits."⁵ Mrs. Dempster seems to sense an emphasis on the Knight's character in the sermon, but she dismisses it as unwarranted: the Hag is trying to prove that she belongs in the ranks of the truly noble; "with the Knight's nobility, true or false, she should not be more concerned than with his being or not being rich," Mrs. Dempster concludes.⁶

Among those who give some analysis of the Knight's role are Kenyon, Coffman, and Huppé. Kenyon, in his discussion of the word "thy" in the sermon, comes close to giving the Knight his due. He argues that the Lady is making "a telling personal application" to the Knight, for "the matter of rank was the most important of the Knight's objections."⁷ Coffman goes a little further. Through the sermon, he says, "the baseness of the Knight's act, by implication, becomes apparent."⁸ Huppé, in a recent article concentrated on the rape scene, does much to focus attention on the Knight, but he is limited by his subject. He is concerned with the Knight's "inner convictions" on the question of sovereignty, and he argues that the answer to the Queen's question, supplied by the Loathly Lady, is not sufficient to change the Knight's character. "That is why," he says, "in the logic of the Wife's exemplum the setting of the dilemma by

² Marchette Chute, *Geoffrey Chaucer of England* (1946), p. 278. See also John Livingston Lowes, *Geoffrey Chaucer and the Development of His Genius* (1934), p. 224; G. H. Maynadier, *The Wife of Bath's Tale, Its Sources and Analogues* (1901), p. 137; Robert Kilburn Root, *The Poetry of Chaucer* (1934), pp. 238 and 241; Émile Hyacinthe Legouis, *Geoffrey Chaucer*, trans. Louis Lailavoix (1913), p. 159; and Margaret Schlauch, "The Marital Dilemma in the Wife of Bath's Tale," *PMLA*, LXI (1946), 418.

³ Thomas R. Lounsbury, *Studies in Chaucer* (1892), III, 417-18.

⁴ Frederick Tupper, "Chaucer and the Seven Deadly Sins," *PMLA*, XXIX (1914), 100-101.

⁵ George Lyman Kittredge, *Chaucer and His Poetry* (1920), p. 25.

⁶ Germaine Dempster, "'Thy Gentillesse' in Wife of Bath's Tale, D 1159-62," *MLN*, LVII (1942), 173. See also Howard Rollin Patch, *On Re-reading Chaucer* (1939), p. 223, and Walter Clyde Curry, *Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences* (1926), p. 113, and "More about Chaucer's Wife of Bath," *PMLA*, XXXVII (1922), 49.

⁷ John S. Kenyon, "Wife of Bath's Tale 1159-62," *MLN*, LIV (1939), 135-36.

⁸ George R. Coffman, "Chaucer and Courtly Love, Once More—The Wife of Bath's Tale," *Speculum*, XX (1945), 49.

the loathly lady becomes necessary; when the Knight . . . admits from within himself the sovereignty of women—then and only then is he truly blessed."⁹ Implied here are some of the arguments which will be discussed later in a detailed analysis of the "Wife of Bath's Tale" itself.

Before turning to the tale, however, let us look briefly at analogues gathered for it. These analogues, we shall see, tend to minimize the Knight's importance in that they do not exhibit his conversion. Because of the faery elements and the setting in King Arthur's court, a Celtic origin in an Irish folk tale has been claimed for Chaucer's story.¹⁰ The Chaucer Society published numerous analogues, but only three combine the story of the Loathly Lady with the story of the man whose life depends on the correct answer to a question. These three are Gower's "Tale of Florent" and two ballads, "The Marriage of Sir Gawaine" and "The Weddyng of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell."¹¹ In Gower's tale the motive for the quest is blood-revenge for a murder. In the two ballads King Arthur is in danger, and Gawaine becomes involved with the Loathly Lady in his attempts to save the life of his sovereign. In all three analogues the aura of enchantment is stronger than it is in Chaucer's story; in all three a stepmother's curse is responsible for the Loathly Lady's hideousness; and in all three the Lady's recovery of her natural youth and beauty is con-

tingent upon her marriage to a perfect knight who will give her love and sovereignty.

It is obvious that Chaucer's story does not parallel the analogues closely. Chaucer has made extensive changes, and frequently the change clearly affects the character and motivation of the Knight. In the three analogues the reasons for which a perfect knight embarks upon a quest are altruistic rather than personal; in Chaucer's tale the Knight is a rapist who is sent upon a quest in order to save his own life. In the analogues the knight marries the Loathly Lady willingly; in Chaucer's tale the Knight marries the Hag unwillingly and behaves ungraciously toward her. Chaucer makes King Arthur a minor character and does not include a stepmother's curse. Also, Chaucer obviously plays down the faery element. As Lounsbury points out, "Chaucer gives in fact such an air of verisimilitude that we accept all the impossibilities as occurrences naturally to be expected."¹² The only definite supernatural elements are the Wife's opening mention of "fayerye"¹³ (859) in the days of King Arthur (a satiric thrust at the Friar), the disappearance of the four and twenty "and yet mo" (992) dancing ladies in the forest, the Hag's knowledge of the Knight's quest, and the transformation of the Loathly Lady at the end of the story.

Thus, though scholars have treated the story as a fairy-tale exemplum, comparison of Chaucer's version with its analogues shows that he actually subordinated the supernatural. We must, there-

⁹ Bernard F. Huppé, "Rape and Woman's Sovereignty in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*," *MLN*, LXIII (1948), 381.

¹⁰ Robert Dudley French, *A Chaucer Handbook* (1947), p. 279. See also Lowes, *op. cit.*, p. 225, and W. W. Skeat, *Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (1949-7), V, 313.

¹¹ French, *op. cit.*, p. 279, and W. F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster (eds.), *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales* (1941), pp. 223-64.

¹² *Op. cit.*, III, 340.

¹³ Middle English quotations are from F. N. Robinson's edition of *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (1933). J. M. Manly and Edith Rickert's *The Text of the Canterbury Tales* (1940) shows no important differences.

fore, choose between two possible critical conclusions: either Chaucer, in retelling the story of the Loathly Lady, failed, because of omissions and interpolations, to tell a tightly woven, compact, and skillful tale, or Chaucer made selective use of the elements of the older stories in telling a story of his own, in which all the elements have a place, even such elements as the initial rape scene, the Midas story, and the sermon on gentillesse. Many critics hold the former view. For example, Sedgwick describes the Hag's sermon on the essentials of a gentleman as not pertinent and says that "the story is hardly in keeping with what we know" of the Wife.¹⁴ Kittredge calls the Wife's tale an "episodical romance" and argues that Chaucer digressed in pausing to tell the tale of Midas' ears instead of making a simple allusion to it.¹⁵ However, in accepting the second alternative, our purpose here is to shift emphasis from the Loathly Lady to the Knight and thus to show the functional nature of the so-called digressions and inconsistencies in the story.

First of all, we note that the Knight is morally corrupt or, at best, youthfully blind and not at all typical of the Knights of the Round Table, as exemplified by King Arthur and Gawaine. The opening scene, in which the Knight finds a maiden walking all alone and rapes her "by verray force" (888), reveals him as selfish and lustful, a man easily aroused by surface beauty and determined to satisfy his lusts without consideration of the cost to his victim or to himself. Courtly love interpretations of this scene are not necessarily destroyed if we accept it as character revelation. It may perhaps be true that under the courtly love system

knights had no great regard for the chastity of peasant girls, but it should be pointed out also that nowhere does Chaucer say that the girl is a peasant; he stresses instead the fact that the Knight belongs to the court of King Arthur, a court noted for its kindness to *all* women, and he makes it clear that the Knight committed a crime for which he must pay with his life.¹⁶ It becomes apparent, too, that Chaucer means to center attention on the Knight, for he dismisses the maiden, although in some of the analogues she is a beautiful girl who becomes the Loathly Lady and the heroine.

That the Knight is a favorite with the ladies, who know and condone his faults, is evident immediately after the opening scene. It is the Queen who intercedes for the Knight—the Queen and "othere ladyes mo" (894)—and the pleas continue for so long a period that King Arthur is finally overwhelmed. When the Queen is granted the right to decide whether the Knight shall live or die, she is so pleased that she thanks the King "with al hir myght" (899). Even the task which the Queen assigns to the erring Knight is appropriate: to discover what thing it is that women most desire is exactly the right project to remove some of the conceit from a male who perhaps believed himself to be the answer to that question. The question is also evidence of the Queen's regard for the Knight: the task is neither fearful nor bloody but may well be woman's chastisement of the rogue male. It is true that, should he fail in the quest, the Knight must forfeit his life; but the problem does not arise. The seriousness of the quest is important for

¹⁶ For varying arguments on the problem raised here see Coffman, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45, 46; Huppé, *op. cit.*, pp. 379, 380; Patch, *op. cit.*, pp. 221-22; Frederick Tupper, *Types of Society in Medieval Literature* (1926), p. 157; and C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (1936), p. 35.

¹⁴ Henry Dwight Sedgwick, *Dan Chaucer* (1934), pp. 292, 293.

¹⁵ Kittredge, *op. cit.*, pp. 17, 23.

suspense and serves also to reveal more facets of the Knight's character. That he places great value upon his life is shown by the earnestness with which he seeks the answer to the Queen's question; that he values life above honor is shown in his dealings with the Loathly Lady. He promises the Hag anything if she will show him how to save himself; then, once saved, he begs for release from his promise. When the Hag reminds him that he pledged himself to marry her, he cries out: "Allas! and weylawey! / I woot right wel that swich was my biheste. / For Goddess love, as chees a newe requeste! / Taak al my good, and lat my body go" (1058-61). The Hag is adamant, and the Knight is literally forced to marry her. At no point, though, does he show resignation or courtesy or even the sportsmanship of a good loser. His reaction to the Hag before the wedding, when she asserts that all she desires is to be his wife and his love, is violent and cruel. "My love?" he says, "nay, my dampnacioun! / Allas! that any of my nacioun / Sholde evere so foule disparaged be!" (1067-69). The marriage is private, and the Knight "al day after hidde hym as an owle, / So wo was hym, his wyf looked so foule" (1081-82). On the wedding night so great is the wound to the Knight's vanity that he not only ignores his marital duties but even chides the Lady brutally for being loathly, old, and of "so lough a kynde" (1100-1101).

Up to this point, the Knight's character is anything but admirable. To deserve the coming happy ending, the Knight must change. Actually, he does change; but there is no magic. The change is brought about by the Loathly Lady's lecture on true gentillesse. She points out forcefully that true gentillesse comes from Christ and is an attribute not of the nobly born alone but of any person

who lives properly. She shows that poverty and low caste are not necessarily a disgrace but may, on the contrary, engender rich virtues; and she even argues that age and ugliness may be guardians of purity and therefore blessed. These Boethian arguments are the Hag's defense of herself; they are also her attack upon the characteristics which keep the Knight from being truly noble. Their prime purpose is to work a sort of magic in the Knight, to transform him; and the magic is potent. Root comments: "We are held captive by the spell of [the Lady's] poetry, and at the conclusion of the speech are not surprised to find that the speaker is of wondrous beauty."¹⁷ If such magic has the power to charm the reader, why should it not charm the Knight?

It is perhaps surprising that the impatient, discourteous, and unhappy Knight listened to the Lady's long lecture, but Chaucer gives ample motivation for alert attention: the Lady, before she begins the sermon, has made clear that she "koude amende al this"—if the Knight will listen to her (1106-7). The Knight certainly wishes to hear any possible way out of his unfortunate marriage. Perhaps he continues to listen because the sermon makes sense, and what he hears demolishes every objection he has to his new wife. At any rate, he is converted. At this point the fairy-exemplum element returns; the Lady gives the Knight his choice of having her old and ugly but faithful, or young and fair and perhaps unfaithful—a Chaucerian change of the older dilemma, again emphasizing character. The Knight's answer has been interpreted by some as sarcasm, but as sarcasm its effect is lessened by the Knight's deliberation. The Knight thinks his problem over care-

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 244.

fully, seeking a way out. "But atte laste he seyde in this manere: / 'My lady and my love, and wyf so deere, / I put me in youre wise governance; / Cheseth youreself . . ." (1229-32). "My lady and my love, and wife so dear . . .": these are the terms he applies to the Loathly Lady after her sermon on gentillesse and *before* her transformation. It is important to note that not until she is assured of sovereignty does the Lady say she will be young, fair, and true; and not until his conversion is complete does the Knight perform the symbolic act of drawing aside the curtains to let in light which reveals that the Lady is in truth young and fair.

Through this emphasis on the Knight's importance in the Wife's "Tale," two major problems have been solved. First, the rape scene is now meaningful in two respects: the Knight's character is revealed, and also in this scene the Wife of Bath takes the first long step toward demonstrating her thesis that sovereignty should rest with the wife, for rape necessitates domination, and certainly it is a crime against female sovereignty. Fittingly, the punishment for this crime is determined by the Queen, who in this instance dominates her husband. Second, according to this interpretation, the sermon on gentillesse is not a digression; rather it is the turning point of the story. As a result of the sermon, the Knight is converted; and through the sermon the transformation of the Loathly Lady becomes double-edged. The Hag's change may be magical, necessary to the happy ending of a fairy story; or perhaps the change occurs only in the mind of the Knight: with his new vision, the same Lady who seemed foul and old and of "low kynde" is, in her wisdom and faith and purity, young and beautiful and worthy of his love.

Two other problems remain. Is the Midas story unskilful interpolation, or does it serve a vital purpose? And does the stressing of women's sovereignty throughout the Wife's tale negate the possibility that the change in the Knight is of importance, or can it be shown that both the sovereignty of women and the conversion of the Knight are vital elements of the story that Chaucer wished to tell?

It becomes essential here, in considering these two problems, to emphasize the fact that not Chaucer but the Wife of Bath tells the tale of the Loathly Lady. Through the "Tale," Chaucer is skilfully continuing the process of character revelation that was begun in the Wife's "Prologue." It will be remembered that the Wife has had opportunity to learn many beautiful and delicate tales and many wise and learned stories and arguments from her fifth husband, the cleric. She likes, remembers, and uses them; but she is not above altering a story for her own purposes, as the so-called Midas digression shows. Chaucer knew, certainly, that in Ovid's story it was Midas' barber who whispered the secret of Midas' ears to a hole in the ground. To demonstrate woman's inability to keep a secret, Alison changes the barber into a woman, Midas' wife.¹⁸ Here we clearly see that the Wife of Bath knows the old tales and will alter them for her own purposes. May she not also alter the story of the Knight and the Loathly Lady to suit her own purposes, to demonstrate her theme

¹⁸ The Midas story may be found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* xi, and it is quoted in *Sources and Analogues*, p. 265. Skeat comments that Chaucer "seems to have purposely altered the story" and that "Chaucer's version is an improved one" (*op. cit.*, p. 317). Root suggests that the Wife of Bath learned the Midas story "doubtlessly from husband number five" (*op. cit.*, p. 242), and Edgar Finley Shannon, in *Chaucer and the Roman Poets* (1929), pp. 318-19, speculates that it was Jankin who changed the story.

that sovereignty should rest with the wife? The abrupt termination of the Midas story ("If you want the rest of it, read Ovid," the Wife of Bath says [981-82]) shows us that Chaucer realizes that the remainder of the story is not pertinent; it would, in fact, constitute a real digression, but that part of the Midas story which is included serves a real purpose in the whole tale.

Knowing that Alisoun will alter details of a story to achieve her own ends, and that she tells her tale to demonstrate that women should have sovereignty over their husbands, we expect her to reveal her bias in the moral of the Loathly Lady story, even if she completely misses or submerges the true moral. She does just that. Sovereignty becomes her principal point, and she demonstrates it consistently in the rape scene, through the Queen's actions, and through the Loathly Lady. Submerged, but visible, is the Knight's story, which

points a different moral: that true gentillesse comes from God alone and brings with it an awareness of moral worth and beauty. We should not fail to note the ironic fact that the Wife of Bath cannot qualify under her own definition of gentillesse.

The present analysis of the "Wife of Bath's Tale" does not exclude the generally accepted interpretations. The tale is a fairy story, it is an exemplum, and it does demonstrate the Wife's thesis on sovereignty. My only claim here is that another layer of meaning exists in the "Tale," for, in addition to the story of the Loathly Lady, we have found the story of the Converted Knight. And this new emphasis on the Knight should not surprise us, for Alisoun herself speaks of him as the character "of which my tale is specially" (983).¹⁹

¹⁹ I am indebted to Professor R. M. Lumiansky for assistance in preparing this paper.

The Early Critical Work of T. S. Eliot *An Assessment*

RUTH C. CHILD¹

Now that some thirty years of controversy have passed, it is possible to consider the early critical work of T. S. Eliot in fair perspective and to attempt an assessment both of its values and of its limitations. Though the uncollected essays and the later collected essays have their importance, the major influence stems from the handful of essays published in 1920 as *The Sacred Wood* and the three critiques collected in 1924 under the title *Homage to John Dryden*.

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These two small volumes brought much that was new to English criticism and contained all of Eliot's significant contributions to critical theory. By the early thirties they had been widely read, studied, and quoted. In view of the subsequent fame of this early criticism, its limitations may appear surprising. And, in view of its limitations, its influence has been extraordinary.

When *The Sacred Wood* appeared in 1920, neohumanism was well under way. *Rousseau and Romanticism* had been pub-

lished the previous year, and literature was being reassessed in terms of its moral values. Those who felt that Professor Babbitt and his confreres were applying nonliterary standards presently discovered with satisfaction Eliot's essays on "The Perfect Critic" and "Imperfect Critics." Here was a brilliant young poet of the new poetic era saying with vigorous emphasis that the critic ought to be interested primarily in art, not in morals. Nor was this the only way in which his work was refreshing. His practical criticism made use of a stimulating new approach.

For Eliot in his early days had one main preoccupation, the analysis of "tone." In some cases he meant by "tone" the special effects produced by versification and the handling of sound. More often he meant feeling-tone. What is the particular tone of a given writer's work, of a given play or poem, of a given school of poetry? And how is it to be accounted for? What special mode of sensibility creates it, what technical devices achieve it? This is a much more specialized approach than has been usual with important critics and was probably inspired by Eliot's favorite critic, Remy de Gourmont, who made much use of the term *sensibilité*. Eliot was able to make this sort of analysis superbly well and to show a whole generation what illumination could come from a study of tone and mode of sensibility.

In all his critiques Eliot's interest in tone and sensibility was accompanied by an interest in technique which was convincingly an interest in the work of art for its own sake. And many of the analyses were buttressed by a skilful use of illustrative quotations which somehow seemed to bring the whole text before the eyes of the reader.

To be sure, this new approach to criti-

cism was extremely narrow in scope, just as narrow in one way as was the approach of the New Humanism in another. For a hundred years it had been a commonplace of critical theory that the critic's first duty was to decide what the author was trying to create, to convey. But to Eliot the author's intention was of no concern; it seemed not to enter the range of his vision at all. Nor in his early work did he ordinarily discuss theme, idea, central situation. In all this he was more narrow than that other very recent ancestor of contemporary criticism, I. A. Richards. Richards taught that in considering a poem one must consider four kinds of meaning: the "plain sense"; the emotion expressed; the tone, that is, the author's attitude toward the listener; and the author's intention or purpose. While Eliot used the word "tone" in a less specialized way, he ignored almost completely the plain sense, the emotion, and the author's intention. In short, valuable as Eliot's critical approach may be, if the modern world had no other it would be poor indeed. But the lively critical minds of the present day have learned from many, and one valuable addition to their array of interests is an interest in tone. It is true also that there is a tendency among some critics to disregard such aspects of a literary work as its plain sense and its author's intention; and for this Eliot must bear a share of the responsibility.

Eliot's handful of critiques has been widely influential in another way: in setting up a new standard of judgment for poetry. While making on the one hand a declaration of faith in the "tradition," he delivered, as even the common reader knows, a series of blows at all English poetry since John Donne. According to Eliot, English poetry reached its peak in

the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and has been deteriorating ever since. There are two aspects of this theory which are important here: the reasons which Eliot assigns for the change and the revision of the poetic hierarchy which resulted from his evaluations.

Elizabethan and Jacobean poets were superior to later poets, Eliot believes, because of their refined and complicated mode of sensibility. They thought through the senses, and they felt their thought. Later poets did not have that gift; their sensibility was more crude. For a "dissociation of sensibility" had set in at the time of Milton and Dryden and continued progressively through the next two centuries. Those contemporary critics who have adopted Eliot's striking phrase use "dissociation of sensibility" in a figurative rather than a literal sense, but Eliot apparently meant it literally. When he says that the poets of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods "had a quality of sensuous thought, or of thinking through the senses, or of the senses thinking," and speaks of their "mechanism of sensibility which could devour any kind of experience," he seems to have meant that the physical nervous system was involved. In the essay on Massinger he writes:

To say that an involved style is necessarily a bad style would be preposterous. But such a style should follow the involutions of a mode of perceiving, registering, and digesting impressions which is also involved. It is to be feared that the feeling of Massinger is simple and overlaid with received ideas. *Had Massinger had a nervous system as refined as that of Middleton, Tourneur, Webster, or Ford, his style would be a triumph.* [Italics mine.]

Earlier in that same essay Eliot has indicated that an actual development of the senses is implied by the style which he praises:

These lines of Tourneur and of Middleton exhibit that perpetual slight alteration of language, words perpetually juxtaposed in new and sudden combinations, meanings perpetually *eingeschachtelt* into meanings, which evidences a very high development of the senses.

Similarly, in the next paragraph he speaks of the "decay of the senses" which followed after the early seventeenth century.

The relation of a poet's sensory and nervous equipment to his poetry is, of course, a common subject of speculation. Presumably, however, no one takes seriously the idea of an actual deterioration in the nervous systems of successive English poets or of the English people. The contemporary critics who have picked up the idea of a "unification" of sensibility from Eliot interpret the phrase figuratively to describe a poetic habit of thought held to be peculiarly valuable.

The most important aspect of Eliot's revision of literary history is in fact just here: the aesthetic standard implied by his conception of the true poetic sensibility. Elizabethan and Jacobean poets are superior, his argument runs, because they appeal simultaneously to thought, feeling, and the senses. That is surely the meaning which may be adduced from such metaphorical statements as "They felt their thought as directly as the odor of a rose," or such pronouncements as "In Chapman especially there is a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling."

And what does this standard imply, this prescribed combination of thought, emotion, and the senses? How does Milton, for instance, fall short of meeting these demands? Eliot, even in his younger days, could hardly have denied the intellect back of *Paradise Lost*, or the religious fervor which pulses through it, or the auditory values of the lines. The

poem, in fact, does appeal to the intellect, the feeling, and the senses. But it is true that the individual phrases are not so sharp in texture as those of the Metaphysicals. The intellect is visible on the large scale rather than the small—in the architectonics, the theological and psychological implications of the whole, rather than in the manifold implications of a single line. The feeling-tone varies from large unit to large unit rather than from phrase to phrase or even from word to word as in Donne. In short, while Milton's great epic is immensely complex poetry, it does not fit the standard of complexity within the small unit, the standard of thought, feeling, and the senses simultaneously engaged in sharp tension within the single line.

Eliot's description of a particular variety of wit in the essay on Marvell has the same implications. This sort of wit, in which levity allies itself with seriousness, is particularly valuable because it is many-faceted.

It is not cynicism, though it has a kind of toughness which may be confused with cynicism by the tender minded. It is confused with erudition because it belongs to an educated mind, rich in generations of experience. It involves, probably, a recognition, implicit in the expression of every experience, of other kinds of experience which are possible.

Such wit fulfils to an eminent degree, in fact, the demand for complexity within the single line.

This idea that poetry is particularly valuable which has implicit within the single phrase or image two dissimilar views of experience has recently become widely current. Eliot cannot be said to be the sole influence here, for Richards in 1924 gave a much more detailed and persuasively reasoned exposition of a related theory in chapter xxxii of *Principles of Literary Criticism*, where he sets "po-

etry of inclusion" above "poetry of exclusion." We may safely say, however, that the two streams of influence coming from Eliot and from Richards have contributed to making complexity—that is, complexity within the small unit—a central interest for a brilliant group of modern critics. Empson, proclaiming discipleship to Richards, has spoken in his *Seven Types of Ambiguity* for "richness," for "density," for the greatest number of compatible or incompatible meanings existing simultaneously within the single phrase or line. Ransom in his "ontological" analysis of poetry gives his preference to a dense "texture." Allen Tate makes a demand for "tension." Cleanth Brooks has analyzed poems in terms of "irony" and "paradox" and, through his widely used textbook written with Robert Penn Warren, has imbued the present college generation with a liking, not to say a passion, for these qualities. Complexity in the small unit has thus become a modern measure of good and bad in poetry. One must prize the intellectual ferment, the creative excitement, which Eliot has had so large a share in stimulating. One may also regret the widespread adoption of so doctrinaire and exclusive a standard.

Another aspect of Eliot's theory of literary history is the constricting effect of his verdict as to particular poets and particular periods. Though he has widened the taste of our generation considerably in one direction, he has narrowed it greatly in another. By putting the Metaphysical poets on a par with the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists and by setting forth their virtues so strikingly, he has played a considerable part in raising them to their present major status; and by brilliantly describing the wit of Andrew Marvell he has contributed to the current apotheosis of wit. But his

early condemnation, later qualified, of all English poetry since John Donne has been, we may feel, immensely harmful. The disparagement of Milton started a wave of controversy which has not yet subsided, even after Eliot's "recantation," and, one may think, has caused Milton's reputation to suffer undeservedly. The Victorians, too, have suffered to an unfortunate degree from the effects of Eliot's sharp scorn. In various essays he dragged in illustrations gratuitously, choosing some of Tennyson's poorest lines, for instance, and holding them up quite irrelevantly for comparison with the Metaphysical best. But it is perhaps the Romantics who have been left in the most parlous state by the awful accusation of the decay of sensibility. For they received this attack at a time when the New Humanists had already assailed the ethical basis of their work. Nor are the New Critics, engaged in trying to find a new idiom for a new age, disposed to rescue either the Romantics or the Victorians. We must leave it to time to produce a reassessment and show us the real status of the poetry of the last two centuries.

Besides these large and sweeping effects on taste and judgment, Eliot's critical theorizing has had a more specific influence in giving currency to certain aesthetic doctrines. In particular, his use of the phrase "objective correlative" has added a new term to our critical vocabulary. Eliot's own explanation of the phrase is rather difficult to follow. In the essay on *Hamlet* he gives us a definition:

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative"; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sen-

sory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.

In other words, a particular emotion—the artist's or perhaps the dramatic character's—is to be expressed by a set of objective symbols which will evoke the same emotion in the reader. The illustration which follows is in terms of the dramatic character:

If you examine any of Shakespeare's more successful tragedies, you will find this exact equivalence; you will find that the state of mind of Lady Macbeth walking in her sleep has been communicated to you by a skilful accumulation of imagined sensory impressions.

The implication would seem to be that the author wishes to arouse in the reader the exact emotion felt by the character—which is seldom, strictly speaking, the case.

But the argument becomes much more involved. *Hamlet's* emotion, Eliot says, is in excess of the facts as they appear. . . . *Hamlet* is up against the difficulty that his mother is not an adequate equivalent for it; his disgust envelops and exceeds her. It is thus a feeling which he cannot understand; he cannot objectify it, and it therefore remains to poison life and obstruct action.

Hamlet's extreme wretchedness is here shown to arise from the fact that there is no objective equivalence between his emotion and its cause and that there can therefore be no objective equivalence between his emotion and its expression. *Hamlet's* creator is said to be in the same unhappy situation. He has been gripped by some feeling which he could not understand, some "intense feeling, ecstatic or terrible, without an object or exceeding its object." Any attempt to express such an emotion is doomed to fail; hence the play *Hamlet* is inevitably an artistic failure. It is not—such is the implication—the "objective correlative" to Shakespeare's obscure emotion.

Thus in one paragraph the "objective correlative" has been equated by implication with the reader's emotion, the character's emotion, the artist's emotion. As a matter of fact, these three emotions could never possibly be the same. And yet the term "objective correlative" has proved useful, for it constitutes a convenient shorthand by which to say that the artist must find the exact word, phrase, image, rhythm, situation, through which to express whatever emotion he wishes to express and to arouse whatever emotion he wishes to arouse.

Another aesthetic concept brought to our attention by Eliot is the interdependence of style and sensibility. This sounds like a romantic emphasis on art as an expression of the author's personality, but it is not so. Eliot speaks seldom of the sensibility of an individual; rather of the sensibility of an age or of a given school of poets. As the sensibility alters, so the versification, the language, alter; as the versification, the language, expand their resources, the sensibility expands in like measure. Thus in the development of English blank verse in the Renaissance "a progressive refinement in the perception of the variation of feeling" went hand in hand with "a progressive elaboration of the means of expressing these variations," each gain helping to produce the other. This concept would seem to be a subtle and stimulating combination of two familiar ideas: "The style is the man" and "Form and content are one."

Another doctrine of which we often hear today bears Eliot's stamp, that of the impersonal nature of art. Here again it is hard to know exactly what Eliot meant by "this Impersonal theory," as he calls it. Is he merely putting emphasis on a universally accepted bit of aesthetic doctrine that the poet should not give us his experience raw, a mere cry from the

heart, but should transmute it into a work of artistry? Or does he mean something much more stringent? From his phrasing, it would seem the latter. The theory is expounded in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," one of his earliest essays and perhaps his least logical. "The more perfect the artist," he says, "the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates." He pictures the artist as surrendering himself to the past, to the tradition:

What is to be insisted on is that the poet must develop or procure the consciousness of the past and that he should continue to develop this consciousness of the past throughout his career. What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.

"Extinction of personality" is a strong phrase. Does Eliot mean that the artist must not in any way let his own personality show through his work? But this is impossible. Or perhaps he means that the artist should not write about his own experience unless he can so transmute it that no trace of the personal remains? That would, however, expunge from the rolls much real art, including most Metaphysical poetry. The reader may take his choice: either Eliot means something quite ordinary here, which no one would dream of disputing; or he means something quite unacceptable.

It would be interesting to pass on into Eliot's later literary criticism and consider the changes we find there: the ethical concern which informs it; the growing interest in situation, theme, idea, author's intention; the very great diminution of illustrative quotation and of critical theorizing; the recantation of some of the early views, such as the early disparagement of Milton; the frequent ex-

cursions into political and religious theory. But that would be to pass beyond the bounds of this study. Here we must stop and make our final assessment.

How valuable may we consider Eliot's contribution to our critical thinking? Valuable, certainly. He has stimulated many critical minds and contributed markedly to the intellectual ferment of our generation. He introduced a new and illuminating emphasis on tone and sensibility. He gave us a number of brilliant insights into the work of individual authors and periods. But when more time has passed and the backward look searches more keenly, it may be seen also

that his early criticism is surprisingly narrow in scope and that a good deal of his critical theorizing is confused or ambiguous. Particularly it may be seen that he has done a disservice to artistic taste by teaching the impressionable and even the less impressionable to look patronizingly on much of their literary heritage and that he has contributed most markedly to a narrowing of poetic standards by holding up all poetry to an exclusive measure of excellence. In some ways, then, his has been a fertilizing influence. In other and very important ways, he has limited and constricted the critical thinking of our time.

The Study of Literature for Students of Engineering

A. M. BUCHAN¹

THE question of what literature to teach to engineering students is still open, but one or two stereotyped pathways of approach seem to be closing automatically. An obvious one is the historical path, still required to some extent of upper students in the college of liberal arts. No teacher of literature can afford to underestimate the "survey," the "period course," or the background of history against which he studies the books of the past, but these courses are becoming increasingly difficult to schedule because it takes time to provide a student with enough history for a background, and he does not come to college equipped with it. So that, even if the various substitutes for the survey probably teach less literature and some of it out of his-

torical perspective, they are forced into the curriculum by the necessity of things.

A different objection can be made to the popular "great books" or "masterpieces" course. The very title assumes greatness in the books read that a student has a right to question. He should learn to be humble in the presence of Plato, Aquinas, or Shakespeare, but he should not be asked to subscribe to their ideas even if they are great. Perhaps the engineering student is more prone than the liberal arts student to resent being dictated to in the matter of greatness, literary or personal. At all events, he dislikes being told that he ought to read some books rather than others, and no amount of persuasion convinces him that a knowledge of any masterpiece is as important as calculus. If he finds the

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Republic hazy and vague, he may conclude that great books are equally so and become set in a dislike for literature.

What is left after the abandonment of the historical survey and the great books panacea is still very important. It is the conviction, if it can be taught, that reading outside the area of technology is stimulating and valuable in itself. Any course that leaves the impression of literature as a cockeyed hobby of impractical college professors should be given up. It is better not to teach literature at all than to degrade it to the level of an esoteric cult.

One approach is already familiar to the technical student, and it can be used to teach him about literature as it is used in mathematics and science. It is the method of the theorem, or the assigned experiment, or, to make the linguistic analogy, the paradigm. In mathematics the theorem is studied so that a number of problems depending on it may be solved. In physics or chemistry the assigned experiment may never have to be repeated as in the lab, but a useful formula is related to it, and other, more intricate, experiments follow. In much the same way, the word that is the paradigm in an inflected language may not be employed very frequently, but a knowledge of its several forms eases the handling of many other words that are like it in form and structure. The theorem, the set experiment, and the paradigm are models of what is done in mathematics, physics, and linguistics. They are important, that is, not so much in themselves—as a great book may easily be considered important in itself—as in the use to which they can be put for further learning and more extensive application.

If this analogy is carried over into the teaching of literature, a few propositions can be laid down.

1. A "great book," used as a paradigm, becomes simply a book. It has no exclusive value even if it is as significant a book as Aristotle's *Politics* or Dante's *Divine Comedy* or the drama of Job. There are other books similar to it that are also worth knowing, and perhaps these others, being more limited in scope and idea, have a more direct bearing on the need of the reader than the masterpiece itself. In any event the practical results of reading the masterpiece should be observable, and among these is some measure of stimulation. It is wiser to have interest kindled in a secondary book than to create boredom with a half-understood masterpiece.

2. Reading a literary work that is not great may be a thoroughly enlightening experiment. The mere fact that the work was once published and read implies that some readers considered it good for certain reasons. Even if these reasons were not lofty or admirable, as, for example, pruriency or sales appeal or the statement of a temporary fad, literature does happen to reflect men's weaknesses, and a book that reveals human stress and strain may be not unlike the branch of physics that measures material stress and strain or the branch of chemistry that computes percentages of impurity in substance.

3. As, in mathematics and physics, the theorem and the experiment have little meaning except in their theoretical context, the single book, no matter how great or small, is best considered in a perspective of what literature is and what it tries to do. One sin of professional teachers of English is their naïve assumption that literature presents, if not the only true picture of life, then one that is pretty close to being true. The mistake of scientific folk who respect literature at a distance is to equate its purpose with

decent ethics and sound citizenship and to object if the two terms of the equation do not agree. Somewhere between these two opinions lies another that may be fruitfully taught so that the student will recognize that the aims of literary creation are quite peculiar and distinctive. He may, and probably ought to, be reminded that he is free to dislike many books, even some of the great ones, but only on the condition that he has made an honest attempt to read and understand them. His teacher, at the same time, having considered books long and carefully, should be able to relate them, and the ideas in them, to a world greater than they.

At the very outset the technical student must learn that creative literature deals with incommensurables. Its field is human experience, and any experience, like a toothache or the pleasure of a drink of cold water, is easy to know and hard to define or measure. Within this field a number of abstract ideas roam around—ideas of right and wrong, of failure and success, of distinctions between what ought to be done and what is done. These ideas can be recognized and stated in so many words, and their worth as ideas can be discussed, for and against, as a philosopher analyzes concepts of truth and error, good and evil. However, the people and events described in literature are presented in the first place, so that a reader will share an experience rather than arrive at conclusions about it.

Usually this experience, like the record of anybody's life, takes the form of "story." It belongs, that is to say, to the great human heritage of myth, like the Jewish account of the Creation or Milton's later account of Fall and Redemption in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. When Hemingway, in *For*

Whom the Bell Tolls, writes about Robert Jordan and Maria, he presents a myth of a man's task of dynamiting a bridge redeemed by a woman's love and other men's loyalty. The creative writer, like the old priest, breaks down human experience into parables, and a parable appears to be a more direct pathway into experience than argument or preaching or technical analysis.

Unfortunately, the so-called practical young person has prejudices against myth. If the story is old, as in the Bible or in Greek legend, he thinks himself too grown-up and modern to be amused or instructed by such ancient stuff. And myths are not only old: they are also mainly imaginary. Only a child or a college professor believes in Isaac or Circe or Beowulf.

The teacher may as well face these difficulties openly. He must make clear one or two simple notions about literature. He concedes that the picture of human circumstance given by literary artists often appears to be naïve. He explains that it partakes as much of fantasy as of fact, being in essence imaginative. And, without apology, he suggests that literature holds no illusion about a brave new world, has no brief for one. Though it clings persistently to a dream of ultimate victory, it suggests that man's victory may come by turning his back on the swift, sanitary, and sterile civilization built only around the techniques.

The easiest of these difficulties to face is the one that great literature is old and somehow childish. Obvious material to use is in the Bible, or in Greek epic, or in other primitive folk legendry. Several advantages come from working with the Old Testament. One is the large amount of sound commentary available for the teacher. Another is that the stories are quite simple and yet broad enough in

scape for a mature understanding. The story of Abraham, for example, in chapter 22 of Genesis, is clear and dramatic and is a parable of a profound ethical concept—that religion need not demand human sacrifice. The implications of the story are broader still, opening up the question as to whether any set of ideas, religious or political, is worthy if it involves the destruction of human life. Against the background of this simple myth, a student can be made to see the dawn of one of mankind's few really civilized conceptions.

The point to be made abundantly clear is that, while the myth is story and often entertaining story, it is also wise comment on human experience. The conditions of that experience change and human attitudes vary, but some of the elements are the same today as they were three thousand years ago. Men have not yet learned the lesson taught to Abraham on a mountain in the land of Moriah, because, in the interest of an illusory and attractive notion of tribal pride, they still destroy the human dignity they seek to preserve.

The primitive legend, then, can suitably be employed as a theorem by means of which to approach the story element in literature. For the story is not a less mature or less valuable comment than the formula or the statistical analysis. It has a different objective, and it applies to experiences that are, at least this far in our knowledge, impossible to describe or analyze fully. Because the story is a myth, a parable, an allegory, it suggests more than can be defined or stated, unless the definition is carried to an indeterminate length. Like the formula in chemistry, it applies to an infinite number of possible experiments in which the human elements remain fairly uniform. Since human situations recur, with more

or less admixture from changing manners, the comment on them given by a shrewd Hebrew or Greek still retains a measure of usefulness. If the literary device seems less precise and more naïve than those of science, the phenomena it deals with are also less definite, though of intimate concern to every man.

A larger problem looms up, that of sentiment. Generally speaking, the technical student, by temperament and training, draws a firm line of distinction between his work and his emotional life. He picks his specialty of applied science usually because it offers a practical road to success; and, apart from this ambition, whatever smacks of "effort, and expectation, and desire" is excluded from his academic purpose. He is, in fact, a representative specimen of our modern society where it seems possible to insulate a man's work effectively from his personal life. In any case, the technical student pretends to despise sentiment and is scared of permitting it to intrude.

As every sane person realizes, this dichotomy is both stupid and dangerous. All art and literature pay tribute to sentiment and warn against the attempt to ignore it. Their power over us goes by way of the heart to the head and the understanding.

But a classroom is the last and worst place in which to handle sentiment. Only the most skilful teacher can take the great emotions of literature to class with him and leave them unsullied, and a mediocre teacher ruins them by sentimentality or a snide flippancy. With the classroom atmosphere as destructive as it appears to be, some practical recommendations may be given.

1. The student should read his assigned books entire, at home, and by himself, before they are discussed in class. Even if he misinterprets, he is

given a chance to "feel" a book before it is taken apart and analyzed.

2. He is also given the opportunity of seeing a play acted or to attend a movie version of a novel. Bad as are many pictures based on works of literature, they do retain some leaven of emotional appeal, and their quality improves year by year.

3. In class discussion the teacher does not expect his students to accept any interpretation of experience offered in a book. He encourages them, rather, to see the relevance of the literary situation to their own, and to realize that, in human affairs, the emotionally colored picture is indeed the fact that must be taken into account. Creative literature dwells constantly on the theme that men ride on tides of emotion and that statistical codes may be not only irrelevant but absurd.

One of the broad literary areas is satire, in which the writer deliberately attacks familiar beliefs and standards. This attitude of criticism the technical student finds as hard to take as sentiment. He cannot imagine why an institution like the church, for instance, should be assailed. He is pledged to the task of improving tools and processes, and he resents the suggestion that this task is only a half-accomplishment, as dangerous as it is beneficial.

So we ask him to read about Gulliver. Part of this eighteenth-century book he will accept without demur, since it is easy to see that politicians are ridiculous, but he will probably object to Swift's attack on the scientists, and he will be revolted at the picture of the Yahoos. Once again, let it be said that he is not expected to agree with Swift. He can, however, be made to realize the point of Swift's indictment of man as an unclean, irrational, and vicious animal, and the

picture may have some pertinence in the light of newspaper headlines.

This process of transfer from the story in the book to the circumstances of common experience is not difficult to achieve. It may, in fact, be too easy unless the student is reminded that the literary man is not primarily a reformer but an artist. He presents, that is, by means of story and for emotional ends, what the propagandist uses for political and practical ends. Sometimes the line between the two is blurred, but the technical student has an analogy, in the distinction between pure and applied science, of the difference between literature as art and literature as propaganda. He is well advised to keep this distinction clear in his thinking.

With some of his objections to literature allayed, he is in a position to learn what the peculiar contribution of his reading may be. Only two aspects can be touched on here. One is the "drama of the individual," and the other is the purpose of poetry, the most intimate of the literary arts.

There is every reason to suppose that the drama of his own individuality is played as intensely in the mind of the technical student as in other human beings. He may "verbalize" less fluently and less often, but he knows the clash of inner decisions, and he is compelled to come to terms with it. Some knowledge of what is going on within himself is a valuable part of his training. He should not be too easily deceived about his own motives or those of his neighbors. And nowhere except in literature is this inner drama fully described or analyzed. There, however, it is as old as the earliest legend and as young as last week's best-seller. It is the theme of *Lost Weekend* as it is the dilemma of *Electra*.

Too much cannot be claimed for this

form of self-knowledge, but it may be hoped that technical students will learn how to reserve judgment on human motives and avoid dogmatism in their decisions about their fellows. They may learn that the "why" of a man's conduct has something to do with the verdict passed on it. Some may even discover the fascination of the drama of decision and acquire a slight ability to know themselves.

It is also feasible to give them an inkling of what poetry is. The roots of poetic expression in proverb, incantation, metaphor, overtone, and rhythm are not hard to uncover, and, if these are presented with abundant examples, they may have the charm of any analytical problem.

The teacher must, however, be wary. His training in romantic poetry is not his best equipment here, because technical men generally refuse to be excited about daffodils or larks or even Helen of Troy. Outside the obviously romantic themes is a field of poetry open to robust souls who feel uneasy in the presence of lush sentiment. The picture of Beowulf and his followers striding over the cobblestones to Heorot is a good example in

hard epic vein. It has fine poetic ingredients—movement, image, picture, and the mood of an epoch caught in swift phrase. Among recent poems, Auslander's "Steel" or MacLeish's "Conquistador" or his magnificent "Not Marble . . ." has a "traumatic" effect on most listeners. It may even be claimed that this kind of trauma is poetry's main contribution.

We may be consoled with the thought that, if Spenser or Dante is out of the question, a poetry less exalted suffices for instruction. Majors in literature, after years of study, often know very little about the great poets. Why cannot the enthusiast for poetry search around for what can be enjoyed by tough-minded, skeptical young people? There are things in Herrick they can relish, or in Burns, or in Sandburg, or in Dylan Thomas. The aim is not to train experts in poetry; there are few such anywhere. It is to convince the technical person that poetry is no more contemptible than a page of formulas, being only a different form of human expression. If a trace of this conviction carries home, a course in creative literature is justified.

Correctness and Style in English Composition

ARCHIBALD A. HILL¹

THE teacher of English is often accused by students of language of being unable to modify his teachings in accord with facts of usage no matter how well proved, and the linguist in turn seems to those of us who have to struggle with freshmen to be a wild libertarian who would accept the most shapeless writing on the ground that all linguistic forms are

equally good. Perhaps, as with other disputes, some of the differences may be resolved if the basic terms are more clearly defined.

I shall begin with correctness, giving a few well-worn statements of what it is not.

Correctness is not logic, since all languages are largely illogical. English says, "I see him," as if sight were a positive

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act of will comparable to that in "I hit him." Yet all of us know enough optics to realize that, if there is any action involved, it starts with *him* and reaches and affects *me*. Languages which happen, like Eskimo, to avoid this particular illogicality fall into others as great.

The basis of correctness is not beauty inherent in the forms used. Beauty in linguistic forms is due to the associations they arouse. Such a form as "goil" is ugly only if the hearer happens to dislike Brooklyn. To realize the truth of this statement, one has only to consider variants where we have no such associations. If a child in the New Mexican pueblo of Santa Clara puts the sentence, "I am going to town," in the form *bupiyuum-mang*, the "ugly" pronunciation is immediately corrected to *bupijeummang*. The Tewa parents are not being merely arbitrary; they are objecting to an unacceptable dialect. I doubt if any English speaker can seriously maintain that he finds one Tewa form more beautiful than the other.

The basis of correctness is not history; such a belief would contradict the results of linguistic science. Further, the belief that older forms are better than newer can readily be reduced to an absurdity. If only old forms are right, then we do not speak English but bad Old English—or bad Indo-Hittite.

Equally certainly correctness is not the result of an authoritative ruling by an individual or a book. A neat example of this last view is the statement of a columnist who once said that 98 per cent of Americans mispronounced a given word, since they failed to follow dictionary recommendations. Actually such a statement demonstrates that 2 per cent of America mispronounces the word or that the dictionaries had better catch up on usage.

A final view once widely held is that anything which is impossible in Latin is incorrect in English. The view hardly needs denial, baleful as its lingering influence may be on the analysis of English grammar. At least, no one would now seriously maintain that "Oh, father!" is a vocative case, incapable of being split into two words.

I can start my positive exposition with a quotation which puts clearly the idea that the composition teacher has a double task. Most of what will follow will be merely an attempt to sharpen the distinction set up in the quotation.

Competence . . . has to do with the organization of ideas . . . with putting words together . . . in such a way as to convey meaning easily and clearly. Decency may be regarded as the manners of discourse, and bears the same relation to speaking and writing that good table manners have to eating. The schoolboy who declares, "We ain't goin' to have no baseball team this year" is using language with competence, for his meaning is perfectly clear, but he is not using it with decency.³

For these terms I should like to substitute "correctness" and "style." Any form is correct if it is current in the dialect—to be defined, of course, beforehand—that the writer is using. A form is incorrect only if it has no such currency. It follows that it is possible to be incorrect in the use of other dialects than the rather vaguely defined Standard Written English with which teachers concern themselves. Professor Thorpe's schoolboy was using language incorrectly if he was speaking in the formal atmosphere of the schoolroom; but, if he was speaking to playmates across the tracks, he was speaking correctly enough. A more serious illustration is that the English department of one of our leading uni-

³ Clarence D. Thorpe (ed.), *Preparation for College English* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1945), p. 12 n.

versities was recently taken to task because its training did not equip graduates to communicate with workmen. The point was well taken: it is as serious an error to use the forms of Standard English where they are socially out of place as it is to use Gullah in the pages of a learned article. Incorrectness can result also, not merely from the use of a dialect in an inappropriate situation, but as well from the mixture of dialects or the improper imitation of a dialect. Readers of Galsworthy may remember that he sometimes makes an American character say sentences like, "If you've gotten a sense of humour, you've gotten it jolly well hidden up." Such sentences are grossly un-American at the same time that they are un-British; they are therefore incorrect.

The second term was "style." If forms A and B both occur in a given dialect, it is impossible to say that either is incorrect in that dialect. It may, however, be possible to show that A is better than B in the particular context in which it occurs. Such an evaluation will be based on the positive qualities of the passage under criticism; that is, A is better than B if it is clearer, more in accord with artistic conventions, or fits better with the structure of the utterance in which it falls. It should be stated emphatically that good and bad style are both possible in any dialect—Professor Thorpe's schoolboy was speaking with excellent style, since his statement left no doubt of the vigor of his denial. It should also be pointed out that, if a stylistic variant is condemned in one passage, it is by no means implied that it should be condemned elsewhere.

A third form of variant also exists. These are the indifferent variants. If A and B both exist, and no stylistic reason can be found for preferring one over the

other, the variation is indifferent. The existence of indifferent variants is of some importance, since somehow the idea has gotten abroad that, if there are two ways of saying a thing, one must always be better than the other. English teachers are all too often called on to adjudicate between six and a half-dozen, though to devote effort to such decisions can only falsify what we so much need to tell our students.

From these rather generalized examples we can pass to discussion of variants such as actually appear in student themes. We will begin with variants which involve correctness, the first group of them springing from insufficient knowledge of the way in which writing represents the forms of speech. It is characteristic of these forms that, if read aloud with normal pronunciation, they immediately become acceptable Spoken English.

He couldn't *of* had a worse introduction.

Sentences like this have a sort of currency in dialect writing but have no currency in Standard Written English. The mistake consists in selecting the wrong spelling for a weak form which is homonymous for *have* and *of*. It is odd that the reverse mistake as in "a pair *have* shoes" seems never to occur.

Rooms for *Tourist*.

This is a type of form which is common in much of the South. What is back of it is an assimilation of *-sts* to *-ss* or simply to *-s*. It occurs at all levels of regional speech, and even teachers of English use it quite unconsciously. The mistake can be explained to students by giving the conditions under which the assimilation occurs and by pointing out that written forms do not recognize the change.

The next group of variants are incorrect because they employ local or social

dialect forms not found in the Standard language.

Youse had better not do it.

This sentence will be recognized as belonging to uncultured New York City speech. Its badness, however, is altogether the result of its lack of currency in standard dialects of any type—it cannot be condemned as illogical or out of keeping with the structure of the language, since it makes a contrast between singular and plural just as other pronouns do, and since it is parallel to the southern *you all*.

I want this *doing* immediately.

This sentence is not likely to occur in compositions by American students, but it is nonetheless instructive, since we are likely to think of anything British as all right. The form is northern British local dialect, which finds its way into occasional printed books, among them those of Hall Caine. It is certainly not correct in this country. Another local sentence type is the southern “*I might could* do it,” which is common enough in colloquial speech, but which I have never seen in print. The sentence should be rejected in compositions, acceptable as it may be in less formal situations.

The next group of incorrect variants arises from an unsuccessful attempt to use the forms or vocabulary of a standard dialect and are thus comparable to the mistakes made by foreigners.

This phone broken. Do not *uses*.

This sentence appeared on a sign put up by a colored janitor in a government building. The writer presumably used a type of dialect in which the present forms of verbs are without variation. Knowing that an *-s* appears in many forms where he would not use it, he corrected a little too much.

Modern culture is *sadistic*. Its music, painting, and literature are all sad.

In these sentences from a doctoral examination it is amusing to watch what starts out to be a provocative statement evaporate into a merely unfortunate attempt at elegance. The mistake is parallel to the student habit of describing modern poetry as “mystic” under the belief that this word is a critical term meaning “hard to understand.”

A final type of incorrect variation is of rather common occurrence in student themes. This is contamination of one construction by another, with consequent production of variants lacking currency. A convenient if somewhat mentalistic explanation is to say that the writer intended one construction and then shifted his intention to another. Readers can readily supply other examples than the one which follows.

There are *a points* which I can make. . . .

The author of this phrase has mixed *are a few points* with *are points*, producing a mistake which at first sight seems quite improbable for a native speaker.

Our next group of variants are correct but are examples of bad style. All but the first are actual examples of composition.

John met Jack, and *his* wife spoke to *him*.

In English, as in many languages, we have no way of distinguishing the reference of pronouns when there are two nouns of the same class, so that ambiguity often results. The sentence above must be condemned as bad style, though similar sentences can be found by the hundreds in all sorts of writing.

Record the pronunciation on the lists in capital letters.

This sentence is drawn from a set of directions made up by a professor of English, who will, I hope, pardon my use of

it. The sentence seems clear enough, but unfortunately the intended meaning was: "Record the pronunciation of only those words which appear in capital letters on the lists." Such ambiguities pursue us all.

This factory is two miles beyond Lynchburg, going south.

This sentence is the only really bad example of our old friend the dangling participle which I collected in two sessions of theme-reading. You will note that I have called it bad style, not an example of incorrectness. First, it produces ambiguity, not perhaps of a sort dangerous to real understanding, but sufficient to give a comic effect. Thus the sentence has positive badness. Second, dangling participles are surprisingly common in Standard Written English, though the handbooks do not admit it. Generally, no matter what our rationalizations, we do not notice dangles unless the stylistic effect is bad.

The next sentence may strike the reader as wildly improbable, though it comes from an actual composition.

Mrs. Jackson devoted many years of endeavor to establishing and supporting a home where unfortunate women who had made mistakes (which they often sincerely regretted) could go to have their bastards.

The stylistic fault is obvious, since the final word comes with a distinct shock, the stronger for the vaguely elegant verbiage which precedes it.

The next variants are some which seem to me indifferent, though occasionally a particularly puristic handbook condemns one or more of them.

He *dove*, OR He *dived*.

It's *me*, OR It's *I*.

We carried it in a *burlap bag* (OR *croker sack*, OR *gunny sack*).

Let him do it if he *dares* (OR *dare*).

The first three of these are regional variants or are regional variants sometimes crossed with social variation. Yet since both forms appear in Standard writing, no matter what the origin, none of them can be condemned as incorrect. The second set is perhaps the most interesting, since *It's I* seems to occur as the natural form around Boston, though elsewhere it is a schoolmastered product not to be recommended. Shelley's line, "Be thou me, impetuous one!" is a helpful quotation in dealing with the overmeticulous, since, though it may be a trick, it is always possible to point out that no one would wish the line changed to "Be thou I." The last set shows variation between an older and a newer form, both of which occur in formal writing.

There follow some forms of wide currency, which seem to me also defensible stylistically, though they are nonetheless often condemned.

The mail is all delivered by plane, *which* is not only remarkably efficient, but is the chief weekly excitement.

This sentence violates the frequently expressed rule that *which* must have a definite antecedent. Yet vague antecedents are common in modern writing and have been common at all periods of the language. There is no ambiguity in the sentence above, and *which* seems a convenient device for avoiding a clumsily exact rephrasing. The sentence comes from the *Saturday Evening Post*.

We might assume that Standard Oil is going to sponsor a news program. *They* will select a commentator with political views which coincide with *their* own.

This example comes from a student theme discussed by a panel of English teachers, a majority of whom regarded the indefinite *they* as incorrect. The sentence is of a type similar to the one above, has wide currency, and is cer-

tainly convenient. The stylistic effect of *it* would be quite different in this passage, and some such periphrasis as "the board of directors of Standard Oil" would be awkward. In the opinion of one person at least, illogical suppleness has always been one of the beauties of English.

I hope that I have by now given enough examples to make it clear that skepticism toward handbook rules does not mean undue libertarianism. To sum up, that part of a composition teacher's activity which concerns itself with correctness is grammar—normative grammar if he is telling students what to use; descriptive grammar if he is himself finding out what forms are current. That part of his activity which concerns the excellence of forms is a part of literary criticism. Both activities are difficult, and both important. On the one hand, it requires investigation rather than mere acceptance of authority to determine whether a given form is right or wrong. For instance, I recently wanted to know whether students should be graded down

for writing "the table's leg" or "the story's climax." I went to a national periodical and found there about a hundred examples of both the *-s* genitive and the *of* phrase, about equally divided between living beings and inanimate objects. The handbook rule is clearly false, and students should not be corrected for genitives which break it. As for stylistics, on the other hand, it is not my task to try to cover the subject, though it is obvious that we must bring to the reading of themes the same sort of detailed analysis which we give to understanding the literature we teach. I am aware that teachers are overworked and that it is perhaps too much to expect them to devote even an hour a week to investigating usage, or that they criticize their themes in the same spirit in which they analyze a paragraph of Swift or Arnold. There is only one answer to such an objection, arrogant as the answer may sound. It is surely better, and in the long run easier, to find the facts and teach them than to rely on a merely convenient myth.

Hope *You're* Coming!

CONFERENCE ON COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION

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COMMAS IN DATES

With few exceptions prescriptive textbooks demand that a comma be used to separate items in dates. Usually examples or exercises are given in which the date occurs in an introductory phrase (*On March 10, 1950, I left for New York*); at the end of a sentence (*I shall leave on March 10, 1950*); or at a place in the sentence where a comma would be required for reasons other than setting off the date (*John Allen, who left on March 10, 1950, has written me a letter*). As a result situations in which no comma is required after the date for reasons other than setting off the date, or when the month and year alone are used, are not explained by specific instructions.

From the examples and directions given in the textbooks, and from citations found within these works, it seems safe to conclude that it is the intention of the writers of the prescriptive textbooks to have the reader understand that the close system should always be used when punctuating dates, that is, a comma should be used before and after the year when the month and year or when the month, day, and year are given.

A brief examination of current usage, however, will suffice to show that the open system is very frequently used in the punctuating of dates. Within the open system three patterns may be isolated: (1) No comma is used before or after the year when only the month and year are given, but a comma is used after the year when the day of the month is included (*May 1950 was an eventful month; May 1, 1950, was the tenth anniversary*). (2) No comma is used in the month-year situation or after the year when the day is included (*May 1950 was an event-*

ful month; May 1, 1950 was the tenth anniversary). (3) A comma is used before the year but not after in the month-year situation and before but not after when the day is included (*May, 1950 was an eventful month, May 1, 1950 was the tenth anniversary*).

In order to substantiate the preceding statements, I would like to offer evidence from three sources: (1) periodicals, (2) books, and (3) business materials.

An examination of a representative group of current periodicals in the college library revealed that it is not difficult to find citations in which the open system is used. For example, in the *Musical Quarterly*,¹ *Monthly Labor Review*,² *Foreign Affairs*,³ and the *NEA Journal*,⁴ commas are used after the year when the day is given but neither before nor after the year when only the month and year are given. In *Newsweek*,⁵ *Life*,⁶ *Time*,⁷ the *Journal of Modern History*,⁸ and the *United Nations Bulletin*⁹ the comma is used only between the day and the year in the month-day-year situation and not at all in the month-year situation. It is interesting to note that not all publications put out by one company will follow the same practices: for example, in *Fortune* the close system is

¹ *Musical Quarterly*, April, 1950, pp. 160, 299.

² *Monthly Labor Review*, June, 1950, pp. 620, 633, 649.

³ *Foreign Affairs*, July, 1950, pp. 634, 647.

⁴ *NEA Journal*, January, 1950, pp. 3, 15.

⁵ *Newsweek*, July 31, 1950, pp. 41, 66.

⁶ *Life*, June 19, 1950, pp. 39, 40.

⁷ *Time*, May 15, 1950, pp. 65, 81.

⁸ *Journal of Modern History*, June, 1950, pp. 103, 114.

⁹ *United Nations Bulletin*, July 1, 1950, pp. 31, 33.

used, but in *Life* and *Time* the open; in the McGraw-Hill publications *Food Industries* and *Business Week* the close system is used, but in *Power* and *Electronics* the open.

An hour's study of books issued by various publishers furnished similar results. In *Critics and Crusaders* (Holt)¹⁰ and *Nathaniel Hawthorne* (Sloane)¹¹ no comma is used in the month-year situation, but one is used after the year when the day is included. However, in *This Chemical Age* (Knopf),¹² *This I Do Believe* (Harper),¹³ *Americans from Sweden* (Lippincott),¹⁴ and *The Great Rehearsal* (Viking)¹⁵ the comma is not used in the month-year situation or after the year when the day is included. In *Jane Austen* (Pellegrini & Cudahy),¹⁶ *George Eliot* (Cambridge University Press),¹⁷ *Experiments in Mass Communication* (Princeton University Press),¹⁸ *Money, Debt and Economic Activity*

(Prentice-Hall),¹⁹ and *Modern English and Its Heritage* (Macmillan)²⁰ commas are not used in the month-year situation, but no examples of the month-day-year situation were found.

In order to discover the practices in the business world, I analyzed the annual reports for 1948 and 1949 of one hundred of the largest American corporations. These reports are usually issued by the department of public relations and represent the language practices of the companies reporting. Fourteen of the reports did not contain examples of dates. In twenty-four the close system was used; in sixty-two the open. In fifteen of those which used the open system no comma was used either before or after the year in the month-year situation (*In May 1950 the Company and the unions . . .*); in nineteen a comma was used before but not after the year (*In May, 1950 the Company and the unions . . .*). When the date appeared in an introductory phrase (*As of May 1, 1950; On May 1, 1950; At May 1, 1950*) a comma was usually used regardless of which system was used throughout the report.

In view of these observations on current usage one wonders whether he has the right to follow the dicta of the prescriptive textbooks and teach his students that only the close system is to be used. Would it not be better to insist that consistency within one work be maintained?

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¹⁰ Charles A. Madison, *Critics & Crusaders* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1947-48), pp. 23, 125.

¹¹ Mark Van Doren, *Nathaniel Hawthorne* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1949), pp. 40, 134.

¹² Williams Haynes, *This Chemical Age* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942), pp. 15, 253.

¹³ David Lilienthal, *This I Do Believe* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1949), pp. 116, 183.

¹⁴ Albert B. Benson and Naboth Hedin, *Americans from Sweden* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1950), pp. 132, 164.

¹⁵ Carl Van Doren, *The Great Rehearsal* (New York: Viking Press, 1948), pp. 160, 216.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Jenkins, *Jane Austen* (New York: Pellegrini & Cudahy, 1949), pp. 240, 334.

¹⁷ Joan Bennett, *George Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), p. 140.

¹⁸ Carl I. Hovland et al., *Experiments in Mass Communication* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), p. 219.

¹⁹ Albert Gailord Hart, *Money, Debt and Economic Activity* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1948), p. 109.

²⁰ Margaret M. Bryant, *Modern English and Its Heritage* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1949), p. 368.

Round Table

CONCERNING "LET'S FACE THE FACTS ABOUT WRITING"

Rudolph Flesch is perhaps the most outspoken Jeremiah weeping over the stagnation of teachers of English. He has read textbooks, though not thoroughly in the case of Brooks and Warren's *Modern Rhetoric*, which he accuses of spending only a couple of pages on varieties of English! He has failed to note that the chapter on "Situation and Tone" and numerous examples throughout the book do consider varieties of English.

So too Mr. Flesch has met numerous former students whom he judges not sufficiently improved by passing through freshman composition. Unfortunately for Mr. Flesch's conclusions, neither the textbooks nor the students he is familiar with may be indicative of what goes on in most teaching situations in the English classrooms. From my more than casual contact with thirty or forty English teachers, I say that the majority of my colleagues accept appropriately split infinitives, teach (if not "levels of usage") that writing must consider the audience addressed, and castigate fancy writing. Like Mr. Flesch, we bemoan the inadequacy of textbooks; and the trite joke is that we would be satisfied with a text only if we had written it.

The trouble is not so much that there are few good teachers but that few of the good teachers are expert at generalities. While the writer of a textbook must generalize, a good teacher teaches the individual student. He may lead almost all his students to improve their communicative and organizational abilities and yet have no way to write about this. The specific techniques he uses in each case cannot be separated from that case. And writing case histories is unlikely to produce a textbook.

My objection to Mr. Flesch's article is

that his deductions lead him to attack a condition that is not nearly so widespread as he imagines. That we would like better textbooks can be agreed. That many of our well-taught students later deteriorate is likewise true. (Could we glimpse a random dozen of Mr. Flesch's students five years after!) And that "the average official or businessman considers an English teacher as an utterly impractical person who spends his life worrying about split infinitives" may also be true. But is not some of this attitude due to best sellers like Mr. Flesch's which spread a caricature of the truth?

No doubt Mr. Flesch performs a valuable service in pointing out specific defects that exist in everyday writing. But when he says that "composition teachers will have to come down to earth and up to date," I would advise him to visit some classrooms and stop judging us by looking at isolated symptoms.

NORMAN NATHAN

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HOW GLADLY DO WE TEACH?

When the inevitable question comes—"And what do you teach?"—nailed to the wall, one mutters, "English," knowing that the sickening response will not be long in coming. First the self-conscious giggle and "I must be careful what I say," then the incredulous, raised-eyebrow "Do you like it?" You are stuck. No answer is convincing or even fitting. Assuming that this traditional attitude toward our profession has some cause, however remote or far fetched, let us undertake to discover it and consider whether it is possible to eradicate it.

In the first place, what are the reasons, real or imagined, for the poor reputation we seem to have among people in general? Undoubtedly, the main one is a student dis-

taste for the subject of English, a distaste he apparently never forgets or loses until he finally has a particularly happy experience in the subject. In such an event he looks upon that experience as a rare exception to the universal and the expected. Another main cause is, I fear, the type of person who is *thought of* as an English teacher. The words connote a little old lady, sweet, perhaps, but uninspiring and ineffectual or a stern, determined, not-to-be-denied arranger of commas and establisher of semicolons. These caricatures are unfair, of course, but they seem to be quite general and permanent. Still another probable cause is the student's own lack of confidence in his ability to use his native language. He knows he ought to know and knows he does not. Somehow this failure is connected in his mind with the English teacher, and he develops an uneasy resentment.

But whatever the causes, the unpleasant result is that many freshmen enter upon their freshman English careers with negative attitudes, all the way from mild distaste and pathetic dread to bitter hatred. Other required courses the student looks upon as only bothersome or as side trips into a new area at worst, as purely temporary and sometimes exciting and challenging. But here is English, *again*.

What possible tack may the freshman English teacher take in his somewhat uncomfortable position as the focal point of the disaffection of many students for the subject he proposes to teach them? This is the equipment he needs, it seems to me: first, a generous and broad-minded understanding and acceptance of his situation. Defiance will defeat him even with those who intended to give his course "a break." Assuming that since students need to learn what he has to teach they ought to appreciate him and his efforts is an attitude too subtle and too sophisticated (or naïve?) for the freshman mind. Conversely, he should not assume, of course, that everybody hates him. Let him start realistically, intending to prove his own worth if not that of his course.

Second, he needs what every teacher

needs and what every good teacher has: good nature and infinite patience. And I do mean "infinite," though by "patience" I do not mean namby-pamby acceptance of sloppy work and forgiving of the late papers. I mean patience to work with individuals, patience to be sure that the least one is making progress and not to go leaping proudly and happily forward with the best students. The form this kind of patience usually takes is individual conference, a valuable, efficient, and wearing method of teaching.

Third, and by far most important, the teacher needs what I shall call "personality," which is one of those words referred to by English teachers as vague but which is actually understood by everyone. He needs to sparkle, to sparkle every day, and for a long time to sparkle more than any other teacher in order to lift the stigma from us all. It is this very lack of sparkle in so many English teachers that has got us where we are today. Name a course in which the full force of an alive and stimulating personality is needed more than in freshman English!

Practically every student in college comes into contact with someone representing the English department, which then unwisely draws its best foot back and kicks the freshman with its worst one, a neat trick, but frequently performed. I don't believe the just-out-of-graduate-school teachers of freshmen are the worst offenders. They at least have the alertness of youth, the inspiration of a new job; and they try hard, overdoing it a little, sometimes, but seldom as badly as represented. The worst offenders in this, it seems to me, are older members of the department—older in teaching years—who resent the freshman class which was thrust upon them and look upon it as a chore which their talents have raised them far above. Of course, my line of reasoning carried to its logical conclusion will lead me into saying that the most important teaching of all is done in the lower grades. This I do say, and therefore I maintain that, if freshman English is important at all, it is the most important English course. The others may be harder or more fun, but what a mistake an

English department makes which allows freshman English to be looked upon as its necessary evil and the teachers of it to be thought of as "serving time."

Likewise, the teacher who accepts his freshman duties and has accepted them year after year until he is in the deepest of ruts is also an offender. He must be jarred, dynamited, into a new approach or removed from freshman teaching if the other is impossible. He is killing the spark in everybody, his own having died.

Perhaps the ideal plan would be to assign each member of the department at least one class in freshman English (certainly never more than three, for obvious reasons). Stimulation of new ideas and attitudes is more important than rule-learning for the freshman as well as for the upperclassman, and every instructor should be expected and required to teach the freshmen with all the enthusiasm and fire that is in him. A man who can't or won't teach college freshmen with all his intellectual power does not seem to me to be worthy of the easier courses—Milton, modern poetry, and world literature.

Sparkling must be spontaneous, and it may take various forms; but here are a few reminders. If every teacher, even those imbedded in the rut, were to look upon his class as a group of dissimilar individuals, each with some potentiality, some worthiness of his time, he would be a better and happier teacher.

Grammar, rhetoric, composition, tend to be too formal as it is. The class meetings should be as informal as the makeup and personality of the class itself will allow.

Here the teacher is tested most. The class will be informal, enjoyable, and stimulating in direct proportion to the teacher's strength and vigor and his ability to draw students out. I am not arguing here for more entertainment in classes but for more real participation and more stimulation of each student toward thinking, along with his writing and speaking.

A re-examination of goals and a new approach to problems would be like a fresh, invigorating breeze in almost any department. There are dozens of new freshman English texts on the market but hardly any revised methods or new evaluations of goals.

So long as freshman English, that is to say, rhetoric, composition, mechanics, et cetera, is regarded by departments as the course forced on its members when the "good" courses are gone, we shall continue to suffer the effects of poor, uninspired teaching. And as long as freshman English is taught by the tired, the bored, the vexed, the lazy, the too-inexperienced, the put-upon, we shall all have to work under the stigma of drabness attached to our profession. The only teacher worthy to teach freshmen is one with a healthy, sharp, alert mind, an understanding and appreciation of people, one who is truly alive in a modern world and is glad of it.

And after a time of brilliant, inspired freshman teaching, everywhere, perhaps the English teacher, too, will not only deserve to be, but will be, regarded with less of awe or disdain and more of appreciation and affection.

GERALDINE HAMMOND

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Flash!

John Crowe Ransome, editor of the *Kenyon Review* and Carnegie Professor of Poetry at Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio, has been awarded the 1951 Bollingen Prize in Poetry, in consideration of his entire work, "for his contribution to American Poetry." His first book of poetry, *Poems about God*, was published in 1919; his latest, *Selected Poems*, in 1945; in between have been more than ten volumes of verse and fiction. The award is now administered by Yale University Library.

The Milwaukee Meeting

MORE than seventeen hundred NCTE members from thirty-nine states braved country-wide blizzards to attend the annual convention held in Milwaukee, November 23-25.

The first general session convened Thanksgiving evening, opening with an invocation by the Reverend E. J. O'Donnell, president of Marquette University, and words of welcome from Harold S. Vincent, superintendent of Milwaukee schools, and Jerome W. Archer, Marquette University, chairman of the Local Committee on Arrangements. There were three speakers: Mark Neville, John Burroughs School, St. Louis, president of the National Council of Teachers of English; Max J. Herzberg, Weequahic High School, Newark, Director of Production of Oral and Visual Materials; and Dora V. Smith, University of Minnesota, director of the Commission on the English Curriculum. In delivering his presidential address, "For Mortal Stakes," Mark Neville glowed as one who "teaches gladly, and his magnificent reading of Robert Frost's "Two Tramps in Mud Time," with which he concluded, was much enjoyed. Max Herzberg, as usual, dispensed provocative ideas, this time on "The Teacher in the Modern World." Dora Smith ignored the technical topic printed in the program and talked inspiringly of "An English Curriculum for Life Today." The texts of all three papers appear in this issue of the *Journal*.

Three group meetings were held Friday morning to explore three basic questions: "What Do We Know about the Ways of Learning?" "What Do We Know about the Principles of Learning and Measurement?" and "How Is Language Used in a Democratic Society?" These discussions extended into a series of Friday-afternoon conferences which were organized around topics dealing with analysis of situations, problems, and adaptations.

* Since resigned to accept appointment as Council Director of Publications.

The speaker at the annual dinner Friday evening was the young novelist Gore Vidal, author of *A Search for a King* and the current *Dark Green, Bright Red*. He talked enthusiastically, but with searching objectivity, of the writings of the new novelists of the past decade—Carson McCullers, Irwin Shaw, John Hersey, Eudora Welty, Tennessee Williams, and others—in whose works he noted particularly an element of pity and compassion not evident in the novels of the preceding generation of American writers. A recital of Anglo-American folk ballads and carols, marked by the freshness of oral tradition, concluded the evening's program. It was given by John Jacob Niles and his young son Thomas, family descendants of a long line of ballad singers.

At the annual luncheon, Saturday, the A Capella Choir of Bay View High School, Milwaukee, sang several selections with spirit and control. Many of them, having doffed their choir robes, returned immediately to hear their haloed author, John R. Tunis, answer the question, "What Can an American Believe?" Nor did Mr. Tunis disappoint them, for he revealed more of his personality than of his methods of writing, and from that revelation could not help but come an understanding of why his books are so appealing to adolescents. He likes them. He has faith in them. And he has faith in America.

Peter Viereck, Pulitzer Prize poet, was to have spoken but actually was snowbound in Ohio. President Neville turned the edge of the disappointment by reading the very clever introduction of Viereck which he had planned.

Mr. Leon Hood, of Clifford J. Scott High School, East Orange, New Jersey, then presented the Council's Radio Award. There were, he said, twelve programs which merited the most careful consideration. Then he named four of these, chosen for honorable mention: "Document A777" (M.B.S.), "Living 1949, 1950" (N.B.C.), "We Take

Your Word" (C.B.S.), and "Invitation to Learning" (C.B.S.). "The National Council of Teachers of English for that program which during the 1949-50 school year has done most to promote a greater understanding and appreciation of our literary heritage, to promote powers of intelligent listening and critical thinking, and to raise the ideals of good speech and writing awards this First Place Citation for the second consecutive year to the 'N.B.C. Theater' and the National Broadcasting Company." The award was received by Miss Margaret Cuthbert, director of the "N.B.C. Theater." Though usually working behind the scenes, she expressed convincingly the idealism driving this program. Listeners who find it one of the best will do well to let the N.B.C. management hear from them directly.

The College Section meeting was held Saturday morning, presided over by Theodore Hornberger, chairman-elect. The subject explored was "World Literature in the English Curriculum." The speakers were Horst Frenz, Indiana University; Miss Agnes Berrigan, Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College; and Ernest C. Hassold, University of Louisville.

In discussing "Comparative Literature and World Literature," Professor Frenz stressed the following points: that such courses provide a broad and international approach for the general student as well as for the major in the field; that a program in comparative literature can be established with little effort and expense, if we concede that members of the English Department are not the only ones qualified to teach literature; that a sensible program in comparative literature can be set up by selecting existing courses from various departments and arranging them logically; and that the chief stumbling block to the teaching of world literature is the lack of good, modern translations, and, conversely, a knowledge of foreign languages is still important for students of literature.

Miss Berrigan, in a paper entitled "The Integration of World Literature with Composition," described the course which has been given for the last twelve years at Okla-

homa Agricultural and Mechanical College. The materials currently included for reading are the *Iliad*, three Greek plays, *The Merchant of Venice*, and Carlyle's *Past and Present*. Miss Berrigan reported that from her experience student composition in this course was generally better than in the traditional freshman-sophomore course, she thinks, as the direct result of the close reading which is essential.

Professor Hassold discussed "The Integration of World Literature with Art." He emphasized that it is necessary to promote standards rather than standardization in such courses, which must meet not only the standards of general education but also the standards set by specialists, and must themselves be integrated with research.

At the business meeting the following persons were nominated and elected as members of the College Section Nominating Committee: Reverend Paul F. Smith, Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska, and Charles F. Van Cleve, Ball State Teachers College, Muncie, Indiana. The NCTE Executive Committee named Porter G. Perrin, University of Washington, Seattle, as the third member. Father Smith is the chairman.

The College Section Nominating Committee presents the following persons as candidates in the Section election to be conducted by mail in May. Other candidates may be nominated by petitions signed by fifteen (15) members of the Section and presented to the Secretary of the Council by March 1.

For Members of the College Section Committee

(TWO TO BE ELECTED)

ALLEGRA STEWART, Butler University
BARRIS MILLS, Purdue University
S. D. STEPHENS, Rutgers University
M. S. SHOCKLEY, North Texas State College

For College Section Representatives on the Board of Directors

(TWO TO BE ELECTED)

J. W. ARCHER, Marquette University, Milwaukee
SUSAN B. RILEY, Peabody College for Teachers

E. E. LEISY, Southern Methodist University
 FRANCIS CHISHOLM, Wisconsin State Teachers
 College
 FRED B. MILLETT, Wesleyan University

The Conference on College Composition and Communication held a well-attended luncheon business meeting on Friday of the convention. Reports from the secretary and the treasurer were good.

Upon motion it was decided to invite Junior Members of NCTE to become members of CCCC, paying the regular \$2.00 dues, and also to offer institutional-sustaining memberships at \$10.00 per year.

The officers were instructed to confer with the officers of the National Society for the Study of Communication (a subsidiary of

the Speech Association of America) concerning possible co-operation or even merger.

The Nominating Committee proposed, through Lennox Grey as spokesman, twenty-seven persons for the Executive Committee, nine each for terms of one, two, and three years. For officers it suggested Charles W. Roberts, University of Illinois, editor; Glenn Christensen, Lehigh University, secretary (two years); Harold B. Allen, University of Minnesota, associate chairman; George S. Wykoff, Purdue University, chairman. These candidates were elected.

The meeting voted for a National Conference in March, 1951, in Chicago, and approved the general type of program presented last year.

Business

The Board of Directors held both morning and afternoon sessions on Thanksgiving Day. Despite bitter cold and icy roads, the attendance was good.

The Board heard and accepted without modification some excellent reports from committees whose terms were expiring. It adopted a proposal by the Executive Committee that the W. Wilbur Hatfield Award be granted to Robert C. Pooley for devoted and effective service over a long period of years as the Council's Director of Publications, the award to consist of a life-membership and an appropriate scroll. (The award was formally presented at the annual dinner by President Mark Neville.)

By its politics-proof system of informal nominating ballot and final electing ballot the Board chose five persons to be the Nominating Committee of 1951, which will propose candidates for offices and directorships in 1952. This Nominating Committee must make its report by January 15, to be published in the May issues of Council official organs and to be voted on by the Board next fall. After the May publication additional nominations may be made, by submitting to the Secretary of the Council, not later than August 15, petitions signed by twenty directors. The Nominating Committee: Mar-

ion C. Sheridan, James Hillhouse High School, New Haven; Harold A. Anderson, University of Chicago; Thomas C. Pollock, Washington Square College, New York University; Angela M. Broening, Board of Education, Baltimore; and Edna L. Sterling, Board of Education, Seattle.

Upon the recommendation of this year's Nominating Committee, reported by Mrs. Luella B. Cook, the Board elected the following officers to serve the Council in 1951: President, Paul Farmer, English co-ordinator for the high schools of Atlanta; First Vice-President, Lennox Grey, director of the division of modern languages, Teachers College, Columbia University; Second Vice-President, Ruth G. Strickland, professor of elementary education, Indiana University; Secretary-Treasurer, W. Wilbur Hatfield, Chicago.

The Annual Business Meeting (all members of the Council) immediately followed the Board meeting on Thanksgiving afternoon. Its principal business was consideration of the resolutions presented by Marion C. Sheridan for the appointed committee.

Besides those of thanks to the Milwaukee committee on local arrangements (richly deserved); to the officers of the year; to Robert C. Pooley, retiring Director of Pub-

lications; to Dora V. Smith and her associates in the work of the Curriculum Commission; and to the many Council members participating in the convention program, the committee proposed:

WHEREAS, Television as an instrument of communication has potentialities for education in all subjects, potentialities which can be realized only in part through commercial television operations,

Be it resolved, That the National Council of Teachers of English urge that the Federal Communications Commission reserve and in due time allot at least 20 per cent of available television channels to educational institutions and that a copy of this resolution be incorporated into the materials to be presented in support of educational television at the forthcoming hearing.

WHEREAS, In the American scene today the security of our own people and the preservation of the basic human rights upon which our way of life rests are matters of general concern; and

WHEREAS, Intelligent devotion to our own nation and to democracy, expressed through both word and deed, is a present responsibility of every citizen,

Be it resolved, That the National Council of Teachers of English deplores the unwarranted suspicions implied in hastily conceived and discriminatory teachers' oaths the effect of which is to weaken collective morale and to divide and confuse, by a questionable identification of the word with the thing, honest and conscientious teachers.

WHEREAS, The National Council of Teachers of English is cognizant of the existence of a continuing emergency in our national life and pledges its full support to the strengthening of our national defenses,

Be it resolved, That we as English teachers believe that our national defense can be most effectively maintained if it utilizes the facilities of our existing educational institutions.

WHEREAS, In a world where the word of men and of nations has become suspect, where using language to promote confusion and false values is a wide-scale undertaking,

Be it resolved, That in such a world we make our primary aim the understanding of the moral nature of the use of language and attempt thereby to establish simple honesty in the speech and writing of our students,

Be it further resolved, That we work on a truly

national scale not for the recognition of English forms but to guard lest they be empty forms; for the recognition of language as a means of effective communication through words—spoken, written, read, and heard; for the recognition of the dignity and force of language as a means of communication, such recognition to be an open-eyed recognition of the dangers and possibilities inherent in communication.

WHEREAS, It is important that students be given concern for all people of the world with an understanding of their contribution to language and literature,

Be it resolved, That further efforts be made to relate teachers of all nations in their common problems and in their efforts to bring about a permanent peace.

Be it finally resolved, That teachers of the language arts be given time and the conditions adequate for effective work on these problems.

MARION C. SHERIDAN, *Chairman*
THEODORE HORNBERGER
LENNOX GREY
HARDY FINCH
MARTHA HUDDLESTON
LOU LABRANT
HANNAH M. LINDAHL

There was considerable debate over the resolution concerning oaths for teachers. Although some apparently approved the most drastic antisuversive oaths and others felt that the imposition of any oaths beyond simple ones of loyalty tends to thought control, the crux of the discussion was the question of the inferences the public might draw from the resolution. Advocates of the resolution made it plain that they do not object to standard oaths of loyalty to our government, our Constitution, our laws. After a minor alteration during the debate, this resolution as printed was adopted with the others.

Mrs. Luella B. Cook, for the Nominating Committee, proposed the following persons for Directors-at-Large for a term of three years, and upon her motion they were elected: Harold B. Allen, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Elizabeth Guilfoile, Cincinnati, Ohio; Helene W. Hartley, Syracuse, New York; Lucile Hildinger, Wichita, Kansas; Mrs. Eula Mohle, Houston, Texas; Mary Ohm, Terre Haute, Indiana.

Report and Summary

"GRADUATE SCHOOL AS A PREPARATION for Teaching" was the theme of the Annual Joint Meeting of the College Conference on English in the Central Atlantic States and of the New York Council of College Teachers of English, on October 28, 1950. The speakers were Dean Thomas Clark Pollock of the Washington Square College of Arts and Science, New York University, and Professor Gerald E. Bentley of Princeton University. We quote from an excellent summary sent us by the president of the New York Council, Lillian H. Hornstein:

"Dean Pollock approached the problem from the viewpoint of an administrator. He said he assumed that the graduate student become teacher would have an accurate knowledge of and love for his subject and a genuine interest in his students and in his teaching. He emphasized, however, that while graduate schools are concerned with teaching specialized fields of knowledge and developing skill in research, the requisite capacity for most teachers of English is an ability to teach composition and literature on freshman and sophomore levels. Even in a representative large college which offers a wide variety of advanced courses in English covering twenty-five different fields and thirty-six different courses, 76 per cent of the classes are still in the freshman-sophomore category. How can the graduate school prepare teachers for these courses? One thing to do is to select for graduate instruction students who appear likely to develop into good teachers. A second thing to do is to direct the graduate student's attention to various current educational problems and philosophies. He should appreciate that as a teacher he will require some knowledge of the psychological factors in the learning process of adolescents and an understanding of the techniques of composition and of the varied methods of approaching literature. Extremely valuable to him will be some

guided and supervised experience in practice teaching, an experience which the graduate school can help to provide. The immediate aim of the composition course is to make the student feel sensitively, understand clearly, think logically, and express himself precisely and accurately. Since this goal is important for the whole educative process, the attitude toward the teacher of the elementary composition and literature courses must be revised. Graduate schools should stress the value and importance of good teaching in freshman-sophomore courses and should stimulate teachers to apply imaginatively their specialized training to these courses. Departments of English should use their influence to see that good teaching on the freshman and sophomore levels is rewarded by prestige and promotions."

Professor Bentley discussed the problem from the point of view of the teacher of literature. His paper will appear in a forthcoming issue of *College English*.

IN "GRAMMAR AND USAGE—SOME Current Thoughts" Dean J. Conrad Seegers of Teachers College, Temple University, supplies perhaps the best survey of writing on the subject since Dora V. Smith's "English Grammar Again" in the October, 1938, *English Journal*. Seegers starts gently, almost neutrally, with a recognition of both sides of the problem, but his survey leads to the conclusions (1) that grammar taught formally and separately has little effect upon usage, (2) that language changes, (3) that language is antecedent to grammar, and (4) that grammar should be taught inductively as needed and when students are mature enough to grasp these generalizations. He reports one important British experiment little known and not generally available in this country. His article appears in the November *School Review*.

THE APPOINTMENT OF A COMMISSION To Improve the Teaching of English in Georgia is announced in the October *Georgia Education Journal*. Co-directed by Bernice Freeman, of the Georgia State College for Women Demonstration School, and Paul Farmer, co-ordinator of English in Atlanta Public Schools and NCTE president, the commission consists of eight persons representing all levels of English teaching. Working largely through questionnaires and check sheets, the group hopes "to determine as objectively as possible the training and experiences of the teacher, the conditions under which he works, the subject matter material he presents to the students, the grade levels on which it is presented, the time given to each phase of English instruction, and the materials which the teacher uses in carrying on his teaching."

THE TEACHING OF REMEDIAL reading is essentially a therapeutic process according to an article by John J. Butler in the *California Journal of Secondary Education* for October. The teacher must think not solely in terms of the improvement of academic skills but also in terms of individual adjustment. The poor reader, hampered by a sense of failure, is usually indifferent in attitude and is often a behavior problem. Before any reading improvement can be accomplished, a sympathetic diagnosis of the learner's emotional difficulties must be made. By ministering to the emotional maladjustments of the student—by releasing his emotional blocks and rebuilding his confidence in the learning process—the teacher creates a reading readiness without which the best-planned remedial reading program will be of little value.

THE PHI DELTA KAPPAN FOR October devoted more than half its text pages to a comprehensive listing of educational magazines published throughout the world. Descriptive details for each entry include the nature of the periodical, the editor, address, and subscription terms. Listings for the United States are classified according to the special interest fields served by the vari-

ous magazines. Compilation was done by the Educational Press Association.

ANOTHER INDICATION OF THE IMPETUS being given to the community college movement is the article "Community College Education—a National Need" appearing in the November journal of the United States Office of Education, *School Life*. The writers, William R. Wood and Homer Kemper, feel that the community college must be the responsibility of government because the complexities of modern living require a longer period of education and because the increasing number of young people of college age requires vastly expanded facilities.

TO MEET THE INCREASING DEMANDS for assistance, a curriculum service center has been established at Teachers College, Columbia University. It is designed to provide consultant service to public and private secondary schools, community colleges, and teachers colleges and to help them improve their programs. Marcella R. Lawler, associate professor of education, is executive officer of the center, a detailed description of which appears in *School and Society* (November 18).

SEQUENCE, AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY published by the London Film Club, is a periodical which all who are interested in the motion picture as an art will find useful and enjoyable. In the autumn issue Gavin Lambert writes on Jean Cocteau as a film director, discussing his methods in detail; Guy Brenton compares the two novels *All the King's Men* and *Tucker's People* (*The Force of Evil*) with their screen adaptations; and Lindsay Anderson discusses the debatable question of how creative a screen director can be. Included also are a variety of sensible reviews of new films, both American and European. Address: 20/21 Took's Court, London, E.C. 4. 10s. 6d. per year, 2s. 6d. a copy.

CHRISTOPHER FRY, BRITISH AUTHOR of the verse-play, *The Lady's Not for Burning* (now playing on Broadway), *Venus*

Observed, and *A Phoenix Too Frequent*, is the subject of an article in *Time* (November 20). This includes both biographical information and critical analysis of his plays. *The Lady* has got the New York audiences crowding in to see its "comedy infused with lyricism." It has also got the critics arguing as to whether Fry is a genius or a jester. The *Time* writer assesses Fry's plays pretty objectively but apparently enjoys his gusto, his love of words, and his lavish metaphors. By contrast, Charles Shattuck, reviewing the recently published texts of *The Lady* and *Venus Observed* in the autumn *Accent*, admits that not the least of his reactions is that Fry's style makes his "teeth itch."

"LANGUAGE OF BUSINESS" IN THE November *Fortune* is the second of that magazine's series of reports on the efforts of business to communicate. American businessmen, it appears, have decided that the language of business is not up to the job. Coincidental with their attack of self-examination, which *Fortune* fully details, a school of experts has come forward to help the businessman redesign the language of industry. The "prose engineering" methods of Rudolf Flesch and other experts are then carefully analyzed and some interesting conclusions drawn. Admitting the liberalizing effects upon grammar and punctuation which the readability method has had, *Fortune* warns, however, that the method has some disturbing implications. For example, the core of the "readability" movement is to write as you talk. But, says *Fortune*, reading and writing are not the same thing, "and to say that they should be allows and encourages us to rationalize sloppiness and faulty thinking." Moreover, there are things which *cannot* be explained by the human-interest tale, and there are times when the *longer* word is the *right* word and oversimplification is misleading to the reader. Above all, if everyone followed Flesch's advice and deliberately wrote beneath the capabilities of his audience, "we would get ourselves into a sort of ever decreasing circle, and, as layer after layer of our language atrophied, eventually spiral our way back to the schoolbook level that got the whole readability doctrine

underway in the first place." What we need, says *Fortune*, is not more "applied" English courses but better basic ones. "Somewhere between the extremes of 'functional' and 'literary' there is a happy meeting ground." The final conclusion of the *Fortune* writers is that the formulas which have ignored the relationship between style and content have ignored the fundamentals of language, and they end with a dictum which the New Critics will no doubt consider "too business-like": "Language is not something we can disembody; it is an ethical as well as mechanical matter, inextricably bound up in ourselves, our positions, and our relations with those about us."

"THE QUARTER BOOKS" BY ROBERT Shaplen in the December *Tomorrow* gives a good picture of that booming trade. After briefly discussing their predecessors, such as the "penny dreadful" in this country and the Tauchnitz editions in Europe, he describes in detail the rising tide, beginning with the Penguin editions in England in 1935 and the Pocket Books in this country in 1939. The success of the Pocket Books by 1943 had stimulated three other reprint houses—Avon, Dell, and Popular—and after the war Bantam and the New American Library (publishers of Mentor and Signet books) joined the others. It is perhaps indicative of their academic as well as commercial success that Ballantyne of Bantam is giving a fifteen-lecture course on the quarter books this year at Columbia! Today some books are not even accepted for publication unless a reprint deal is first arranged. The reprinter is thus becoming the tail that wags the dog, Shaplen says, and "he may increasingly 'mongrelize' the trade." He doubts if the reprinters can ever "wholly renounce shooting and sin" but points out that there is evidence of some discrimination in public taste, because, although it is true that the mystery and the western will sell best in any given month, it is also a fact that Shakespeare and the cookbook have outsold them all over a given period of time. (In May, 1948, the *English Journal* and *College English* carried an excellent article with the very same title by John T. Frederick.)

New Books

College Teaching Materials

POETS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

Edited by W. H. AUDEN and NORMAN HOLMES PEARSON. 5 vols. ("Viking Portable Library," Nos. 49-53.) Viking Press, 1950. (Vol. I: *Langland to Spencer*; Vol. II: *Marlowe to Marvell*; Vol. III: *Milton to Goldsmith*; Vol. IV: *Blake to Poe*; Vol. V: *Tennyson to Yeats*.) \$2.50 each vol.

Anyone aware of English may well be pleased at one more proof that our language, much as we know it now, has been a medium of poetry for better than six hundred years. By the breadth of their selections for *Poets of the English Language*, W. H. Auden and Norman Holmes Pearson have supplied such proof impressively. Nor need they apologize, as they come near to doing, for omitting biographical information other than dates for the 157 named poets represented. Even were all the entries printed anonymously, they would still provide the important thing: what the editors call "the autobiography of the poetical imagination and fancy."

As a practicing artist Auden has shown nothing if not versatility. Now as co-editor he reveals a wide tolerance of varying forms and moods. At his and Pearson's hands, classicists and Romanticists get equal innings, and no school, whether metaphysical or other, wins undue emphasis. The traditional "greats" enjoy the ampler spacings that few readers would deny them; those with lesser but still familiar names are substantially present; and certain little-known poets, rescued only lately from the mufflings of time, become distinct voices. The tendency too often seen in anthologies to clutter a score of pages with tiny cullings from as many writers has been almost consistently avoided. Each volume contains a helpful "Calendar," listing cultural events as well as important poems for the period covered by the text.

In their introductions the editors comment tellingly not only on the methods and themes of the poets from early to recent times but also on the varying social conditions that formed their

workshop. These discussions are notable for frequent mastery of phrase and for a wealth of seemingly casual erudition. It is nothing against them that, although clearly written, they will probably mean more to high-brows than to those whom the editors call middle-brows; for, honestly practiced, the criticism of poetry is not a simple art. Poetry itself, however, is for all brows, and it is gratifying to observe again, in these volumes, how handsomely and irrefutably it pleads for the civilizing spirit.

ROBERT A. HUME

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA

A HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE.

By GEORGE K. ANDERSON, HARDIN CRAIG, LOUIS I. BREDVOLD, and JOSEPH WARREN BEACH. Oxford University Press, 1950. Pp. 697. \$8.00.

The important question to ask about a book with this title, since so many approaches are possible, is: What reader is addressed? Hardin Craig, the general editor, believes it will be valuable to college and university students, to their teachers, and to general readers. To compress the subject within seven hundred pages, selection is necessary. The four authors tend to leave out "history": they do not so much assume it as ignore it. The book therefore will not particularly interest those readers who wish to understand how literature grows out of a culture, who value the history of ideas, or who speculate on changes, developments, and causes. Since it is designed as an elementary introduction, minor figures are grouped or dismissed, and no knowledge of major figures is assumed. The typical unit is a sketch of a writer with biographical details woven into a description of his principal works and culminating with some high-lighting of his qualities. Its size keeps it from being an encyclopedia like the *Cambridge History*, and its focus is narrower than the one-volume Cambridge abridgment.

Implicit in its authorship by four distinguished American scholars is the notion that

"the only true syntheses are those that come about in the minds of earnest and competent students." The result is that this book does not defend a thesis, as do Legouis and Cazamian, or present one man's view, as Osgood's *The Voice of England* does so admirably. Its conclusions are trustworthy rather than spectacular, as if its authors feel that they must represent majority opinion. As specialists they feel also that they must take into account recent scholarship and questions of authenticity: *Henry VIII* gets more space than *Othello*; the question of a possible quarrel between Chaucer and Gower is waived for lack of evidence, but only after it is discussed in some detail.

Since the volume actually contains four separate books, it holds together surprisingly well, both in clear style and in consistent approach. The Bibliography is uneven: some sections come up to 1950; but, to take one example, the latest book cited for Blake is dated 1927, in spite of Northrup Frye, Mark Schorer, and Bernard Blackstone. Students will find the Bibliography generally excellent as initiation into special studies. The book as a whole is intelligent and in some sections eminently readable; it establishes itself as the most solid and dependable one-volume history; and it rarely loses its target: *literature*.

DONALD A. STAUFFER

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

Paperbacks

COLONIAL AMERICAN WRITING. Edited by ROY HARVEY PEARCE. Pp. 581.

LITERATURE OF THE EARLY REPUBLIC. Edited by EDWIN H. CADY. Pp. 495.

POETRY OF THE NEW ENGLAND RENAISSANCE, 1790-1890. Introduction by GEORGE F. WHICHER. Pp. 458.

Reinhart. \$0.95 each.

SELECTED PROSE AND POETRY. By STEPHEN CRANE. Introduction by WILLIAM M. GIBSON. Pp. 230.

THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE. By THOMAS HARDY. Introduction by ALBERT J. GUÉRARD, JR. Pp. 481.

SELECTED PROSE. By WASHINGTON IRVING. Introduction by STANLEY T. WILLIAMS. Pp. 423.

SELECTED TALES AND POEMS. By HERMAN MELVILLE. Edited by RICHARD CHASE. Pp. 417.

MCTEAGUE. By FRANK NORRIS. Introduction by CARVEL COLLINS. Pp. 324.

HUMPHREY CLINKER. By TOBIAS SMOLLETT. Introduction by ROBERT GORHAM DAVIS. Pp. 414.

TRISTRAM SHANDY. By LAURENCE STERNE. Introduction by SAMUEL H. MONK. Pp. 577.

Rinehart. \$0.75 each.

WRITING BUSINESS LETTERS. By EARL P. STRONG. American Book. Pp. 329. \$2.75.

A combined handbook and workbook. Contents divided into three main sections on the mechanics, the fundamentals, and the applications of the principles of business letter writing. Many exercises for each section. The section on fundamentals is concerned with the mechanics of writing focused to current usage in acceptable business letters.

THE COLLEGE RESEARCH PAPER. By EUGENE F. GREWE and JOHN F. SULLIVAN. Rev. ed. William C. Brown Co. (Dubuque, Iowa). Pp. 110. \$1.50.

Shows complete procedure for the writing of such a paper from the assigning to the handing in. Explains clearly each stage of research and writing and each detail of form and includes a complete research paper exactly as it should be prepared by the student.

Films

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND. Life Filmstrips (9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20). \$4.50.

The starting point for this collection of illustrations was Louis Kronenberger's essay in *Life*, September 13, 1948, edited and supplemented by John Goldsmith Phillips of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. There are forty-five intelligently selected and arranged views, interspersed with brief legends. These filmstrips are not available for lending or rental, but the price seems reasonable. The accompanying "lecture notes" are very brief, and the instructor will have to supplement them. Now and then he can correct them; in connection with the inevitable "Interior of a Coffee House," for example, he will point out that Dryden could never have been found at Button's.

At this first stage the illustrations may well be salient and obvious. After the filmstrip might come the excellent set of plates, *Life in Eight-*

eenth Century England, edited by Robert J. Allen (Boston Museum of Fine Arts). It is helpful for the student to see the same picture in different places—not only the usual literary portraits and the favorite Hogarths but the Rowlandsons and Morlands that are likely to be less familiar to him and such valuable documents as Monamy's "Old East India Wharf." The eighteenth-century volume of the Hartley and Elliot *Life and Work of the People of England* (Batsford) has many rare prints touching on everyday life, though the plates are excessively small. The list could be indefinitely extended, but, after all, the student will have to fend for himself in illustrated books and periodicals and, if he is fortunate, in museums and print rooms.

ALAN D. McKILLOP

RICE INSTITUTE

WRITING THE PARAGRAPH. By REID IRVING. 8 Filmstrips. Film Publishers. \$24.00.

These film strips are in four divisions, *Words, The Simple Sentence, The Complex Sentence, and Building a Paragraph*. *Words* prepares the student for an understanding of the origins of language in an intriguing way. The running commentary is rich with provocative references to word origins. It has a contagious quality that could lead to further investigation by the student. *The Simple Sentence* adds little of value and seems elementary, included in order to round out the series. It suggests nothing new or novel for the student who has even a nodding acquaintance with the subject, or the predicate, for that matter. *The Complex Sentence*, on the other hand, attempts an important and frightening task. I would evaluate this section as effective in part, and that part escapes from the usual grammar rules into the real writing of young people. The part that seems to be ineffective and discouraging stresses abstract grammar rules in terms which, alas, do not seem to mean much to our students. A more generous use of examples of sentences, clauses, and the like within the range of the student's vocabulary may prove more effective than any whispered, thundered, or pictured advice to memorize grammar terms. *Building a Paragraph* uses an interesting analogy in comparing paragraph-building to the constructing of a house. There is forced comparison for comparison's sake, but this is a noble attempt to provide the student with some tangible structure upon which to hinge rules. It is involved but effective.

Students will need to be prepared for the particular message of each film strip, and the teacher would be wise to prepare himself with extra material to amplify. There is much skill in the easy flow of the commentaries throughout that will prove of value. Both the traditional grammarian who clings to the discipline of prescriptive grammar teaching and the exploring linguist who has abandoned the artificial landmarks and is reaching for descriptive methods of introducing ideas about language structure and idiom will find comfort and uses for these strips. It is hard to make the learning of grammar painless. Here, at least, is a painless teaching aid.

PETER DONCHIAN

WAYNE UNIVERSITY

HOW TO WRITE EFFECTIVELY. VIOLA THEMAM, collaborator. Coronet. \$50.00.

How To Write Effectively combines simplicity in exposition with a smooth-flowing narrative appropriately set against the usual high school background. It makes no attempt to romanticize schools; a life-situation is set up with a class committee engaged in the job of publicizing a party with a motive. These boys and girls stay on their normal level of usage and could be set apart from the normal students only by their nice concentration upon the work at hand. This attitude will not disturb student audiences, though it may startle a disillusioned teacher here and there. The editors of the film avoid the danger of crowding too much into too little space and time by restricting their instructional ideas to five simple and understandable rules couched in a suitable vernacular. There is first-class exposition of the need to define and to analyze one's purpose in any writing. Actual emphasis is placed upon what is so often forgotten, the audience for whom the writing is intended. The film sensibly side-steps the impossible and does not attempt to teach writing *per se*. Teachers are encouraged to direct the students' attention to a real and functional situation where writing has an immediate purpose.

P. D.

WRITING BETTER SOCIAL LETTERS. RUTH STRANG, collaborator. Coronet. \$50.00.

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Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. Pp. 32. \$0.10.

The official government booklet. The material is succinct and specific enough to be assimilated by secondary students. Blanket permission to reproduce the pamphlet locally has been granted.

KNOW YOUR CAPITAL CITY. By MARY

WILLCOCKSON. (U.S. Office of Education Bulletin 1950, No. 18.) Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D.C. Pp. 39. \$0.20.

A handy combination guidebook and history of Washington written in a chatty, informal fashion. Ideal for either the individual high school student or the various young groups which make the trip to the nation's capital.

WHERE ARE YOUR MANNERS? By BAR-

BARA VALENTINE HERTZ. ("Life Adjustment Booklet.") Science Research Associates. Pp. 48. \$0.40.

Professional

THIS GREAT STAGE: IMAGE AND STRUCTURE IN KING LEAR. By ROBERT B. HEILMAN. Louisiana State University Press. Pp. 339. \$3.50.

Applying methods which "will not seem strange to anyone who has some acquaintance with the techniques of poetic analysis that have come into general use during the last two decades," Professor Heilman attempts to determine the meaning of Shakespeare's *King Lear* through the study of its language structure. The play is viewed essentially as a poem and, in its treatment of certain themes, is likened to an essay "necessarily broken up into parts which are apportioned according to, and probably modified by, dramatic necessity." Professor Heilman argues that a series of dramatic statements about one subject constitutes "a bloc of meaning which is a structural part of the play" and continues to define a play in this way: "This bloc may be understood as one of the author's metaphors. The dramatist's basic metaphor is his plot. All of his metaphors are valid parts of his

total meaning, the search for which must include a study of the relationship among the parts. All the constituent metaphors must be related to the large metaphor which is the play." Following this definition, Heilman discusses in great detail the various image patterns to be found in *King Lear* (sight and blindness, madness and reason, nakedness and clothing, etc.), the striking repetition of words, the recurrence of themes. (The nature theme, for instance, is expressed through animal and sex imagery.) He traces the relationship of the patterns and shows how each of them strikes a universal note. The close association between the storm and man's nature, the image of justice, the references to the animal world, the problem of values, the paradox of the blind gaining insight and the ruthless and powerful going down in defeat—these and similar elements account ultimately for the creation of a perfect dramatic composition. Heilman's analysis is stimulating; he makes a good case for his assertion that in *King Lear* the imagery is central, that imagery

groups are "theme carriers," not just adornments.

In his notes Heilman makes valuable comments on the scholarship concerned with Shakespeare's imagery and pays particular attention to those critics who, he finds, parallel some of his own interpretations. Interestingly enough, he has praise for and quotes a great deal from Granville-Barker, who frequently agrees with his analysis of the play but would have disagreed violently with Heilman's basic definition of a play. There are other predecessors that Heilman might have cited, particularly Wolfgang Clemen, who, in his book on *Shakespeares Bilder* (Bonn, 1936), anticipated in a less detailed way Heilman's approach to the study of a Shakespearean play.

HORST FRENZ

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

SELECTED ESSAYS. By T. S. ELIOT. New ed. Harcourt. Pp. 460. \$4.50.

Eliot writes: "This book is a kind of historical record of my interests and opinions." Contains his choice of all the prose he has written since 1917, including essays from *The Sacred Wood*, *For Lancelot Andrewes*, and *Essays Ancient and Modern*, and the whole of *Dante and Homage to John Dryden*, thirty-seven in all. The volume makes possible for the average reader a revaluation of the work of the pioneer who charted the early course of the New Criticism.

VISIONS FROM PIERS PLOWMAN: TAKEN FROM THE POEM OF WILLIAM LANGLAND. Translated by NEVILL COGHILL. Oxford University Press. Pp. 143. \$3.00.

A translation for the contemporary reader by a scholar well known in Britain for his radio readings of the poems of Langland and Chaucer. The language used is vigorous modern English. An appendix contains information on the poet's life, medieval allegory, and meter. Illustrated.

CONSERVATIVE ENGLAND AND THE CASE AGAINST VOLTAIRE. By BERNARD N. SCHILLING. Columbia University Press. Pp. 394. \$4.50.

The author has turned up a considerable information of the English people which sharpens our knowledge and understanding of the conservative temper in the eighteenth century. He

is concerned primarily with the attitudes and opinions which dominated England from the 1688 revolution to 1800 and led to the eventual attack upon Voltaire as the man who caused the French Revolution by undermining the church. Actually it reveals much more by indirectly drawing a subtle picture of the intellectual change which marks the transition from the "Age of Reason" to the "Age of Romanticism."

THEATRE ANNUAL, 1950, Vol. VIII. Edited by WILLIAM VAN LENNEP. Theatre Library Association, New York (PO Box 935, Grand Central Station). Pp. 81. List: \$1.50. Library: \$1.00.

Contains five articles on the arts and history of the theater. Robert Downing, producing stage manager of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, takes the reader backstage to show how a modern play is put on; E. J. West discusses Shaw's criticism of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*; Alois Naylor writes on "German Audiences in the Eighteenth Century," Shirley Allen on "Samuel Phelps, Last of a Dynasty," and John Woodruff on "America's Oldest Living Theatre—the Howard Athenaeum."

THE YEAR'S WORK IN ENGLISH STUDIES, 1947. Vol. XXVIII. Edited for the English Association by FREDERICK S. BOAS. Oxford University Press, 1949. Pp. 290.

Gives an excellent bird's-eye view of the results of linguistic and literary research published in the field of English during the year 1947.

A LIFE OF JOHN KEATS. By DOROTHY HEWLETT. 2d rev. ed. Barnes & Noble. Pp. 408. \$5.00.

Includes new material, much of it concerning the tangled financial affairs of the Keats family; also a new portrait of Keats, a photograph of the long-lost death mask, and extracts from the diaries of the painter Haydon. The first edition was published in England under the title *Adonais*.

WALDEN. By HENRY D. THOREAU. Introduction by JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH.

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THIS IS MY STORY. By ELEANOR ROOSEVELT. Bantam. Pp. 270. \$0.25.

UP FRONT. By BILL MAULDIN. Bantam. Pp. 216. \$0.25.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE. By HENRY D. THOREAU. 5x8 Press (Saugatuck, Conn.). Pp. 31. \$0.35. Paper.

Reprints

DESCRIPTIVE ENGLISH GRAMMAR. By HOMER C. HOUSE and SUSAN E. HARMAN. 2d ed. Prentice-Hall. Pp. 457. \$3.25.

"The emphasis in the revision is definitely on the living language. Historical forms are cited only when they throw light on present-day usage." First published in 1931.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF LITERARY FORM. By KENNETH BURKE. Louisiana State University Press. \$5.00.

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Contains twenty-nine units, of which eight deal with television. The units vary in their emphasis. Some deal with listening, others with evaluating, others with the place of radio in

modern life. The units appeared serially in *Audio-Visual Guide* for September, October, November, and December of last year.

THE BASIC PROGRAMME: UNESCO AND ITS PROGRAMME. Education Clearing House, UNESCO (19 Avenue Kleber, Paris XVI). Pp. 26.

A series of resolutions adopted by the fifth session of the General Conference in Florence last year. They are grouped under seven heads: Education, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Cultural Activities, Exchange of Persons, Mass Communication, Relief Services.

THE RACE QUESTION: UNESCO AND ITS PROGRAMME. Education Clearing House, UNESCO (19 Avenue Kleber, Paris XVI). Pp. 11.

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MY NECK OF THE WOODS. By LOUISE DICKINSON RICH. Lippincott. \$2.75.

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This fourth volume of "The Second World War Series" is called *The Hinge of Fate* because

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A HISTORY OF MEXICO. By HENRY BAMFORD PARKES. Rev. ed. Houghton. \$5.00.

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